This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

MY FATHER'S GARDEN

BY

THOMAS MILLER

600056281S

S GARDEN.

MY FATHER'S GARDEN.

BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

Front. **"When I have watched you while at work."** **Chap. 1, p. 4**

MY FATHER'S GARDEN.

BY

THOMAS MILLER.

WITH FORTY ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.
NEW YORK: BROOME STREET.
1867.

250. n. 248.

LONDON:
BRADBURY, EVANS, AND CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

HOW WE FELL INTO GREAT TROUBLE 1

CHAPTER II.

HOW OUR BUSINESS BECAME WORSE AND WORSE 9

CHAPTER III.

WHILE WE WATCH THE END, MOTHER SEES A NEW BEGINNING 19

CHAPTER IV.

I MEET DIFFICULTY FACE TO FACE 27

CHAPTER V.

HOW WITH A LITTLE HELP I PUT UP MY GREENHOUSE . . 37

CHAPTER VI.

HOW I MANAGED MY "CUTTINGS," AND FILLED MY GREENHOUSE WITH PLANTS 45

CHAPTER VII.

HOW I EMPLOYED MYSELF UNTIL MY PLANTS WERE READY . 53

CHAPTER VIII.

MY FIRST PLANTS BRING IN MONEY JUST IN TIME FOR US . . 65

CHAPTER IX.

HOW I PAID MY POTTER BY SELLING MY "CHRISTINES" . . 77

CHAPTER X.

WHAT I STILL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH, AND WHAT I THINK OF DOING 89

CHAPTER XI.

SHOWING HOW "IT SELDOM RAINS BUT IT POURS" . . . 101

CHAPTER XII.

HOW I RAISED THE MONEY TO BUILD ANOTHER GREENHOUSE . 113

CHAPTER XIII. PAGE

HOW I GOT ON WITH MY GREENHOUSE, MISS ROSE, AND "MRS. POLLOCK" 121

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW I GOT A CHEQUE-BOOK, AND DREW MY FIRST CHEQUE . 133

CHAPTER XV.

HOW I JOINED THE RIFLES, AND EXTENDED MY CONNECTION . 145

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW ALL BUT POOR HARRY RECEIVE THEIR JUST WAGES . . 157

CHAPTER XVII.

I MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS, AND PUT AN END TO A GREAT TROUBLE. 169

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW I MADE A PLEASURE OF BUSINESS, AND MET WITH A GREAT SURPRISE 181

CHAPTER XIX.

"GOLDEN HAIR" 191

CHAPTER XX.

CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSE ME TO CROSS-EXAMINE MYSELF . . . 201

CHAPTER XXI.

LEASE AND RELEASE 213

CHAPTER XXII.

I FIND IT HARD TO CONQUER MY EVIL NATURE 223

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW MR. ROSE "HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD" AT ONCE . 235

CHAPTER XXIV.

"TO BRIGHTON AND BACK IN A DAY" 245

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW I SET A TRAP TO CATCH LILY FOR LORRIMER . . . 255

CHAPTER XXVI.

A TALK ABOUT OLD TIMES, AND A LITTLE DINNER . . . 265

CHAPTER XXVII.

RETROSPECTIVE 273

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JUSTICE TO ALL, AND ATTAIN THE END AIMED AT . . 295

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

WHEN I HAVE WATCHED YOU WHILE AT WORK 4

MARKET-GARDENING WAS HARD WORK 16

THE FAR-AWAY COUNTRY, WHERE CHILDREN PLAY ON THE VILLAGE-GREEN 43

WAS A GIPSY-BOY, AND HAD LIVED IN TENTS 56

GARDENER TO A LADY 79

ALL THE CHILDREN SWARMING ABOUT HIM 114

MISS ROSE VERY OFTEN RODE WITH ME 152

A WARM WELCOME AT THEIR HOUSES 182

SHE WAS RIDING, AND I WAS WALKING BESIDE HER . . 201

I ENTERED THE PARK, AND THREW MYSELF UNDER A TREE . 232

LOOKING OUT OVER THE SEA 249

WHEN WE SAT DOWN BY THE ROAD-SIDE 285

VIGNETTES.

OLD DAISY FIELD FARM 1

WHEN CHILDREN GATHERED FLOWERS ON DAISY FIELD FARM . 9

I WENT TO ONE OR TWO PIC-NICS IN THE WOODS 19

THE OLD ELIZABETHAN MANOR-HOUSE 27

BREAKFAST IN MR. ROSE'S GARDEN, WITH HIS DAUGHTER . . 37

MY FATHER'S PLEASANT WALKS THROUGH A SHADY WOOD . . 45

PLEASANT COUNTRY WALKS BEYOND THE REFORMATORY . . 53

GATHERING FLOWERS THAT WERE TWINED ABOUT THE TRELLIS-WORK ABOVE HER HEAD 65

PAGE

AN OLD GARDEN OF THE PERIOD OF CHARLES THE FIRST . . 77

I HAD MANY A PLEASANT RIDE 89

A BEAUTIFUL COTTAGE NEAR THE RIVER MOLE 101

SHE SAT IN THE RUSTIC PORCH AND TOLD ME OF THEIR LOSS . 113

A STILL, OLD, OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACE, SELDOM VISITED . . 121

LITTLE GOLDEN HAIR 133

SECLUDED AND PICTURESQUE COTTAGE 145

THE LONG LEVEL WASTE WHICH I OVERLOOKED 157

WHERE I OFTEN MET THE PRETTY MILKMAID 169

A NICE HOUSE IN SUCH A SWEET SPOT AS THIS 181

A PEACEFUL OLD-FASHIONED VILLAGE 191

WRETCHED TUMBLE-DOWN SHED 201

WE WERE HAY-MAKING ON ONE OF MR. ROSE'S FARMS . . 213

A LITTLE COTTAGE STANDS AT THE FOOT OF THE WELL-WOODED HILL-SIDE 223

ONE OF THOSE QUIET VILLAGES WE ARE ALL SO FOND OF . . 235

A GOLDEN PATHWAY LEADING TO THE GATES OF HEAVEN . . 245

A GREEN COUNTRY CHURCHYARD 255

RIVER FRONT OF THE OLD HOUSE 265

WE WENT BACK ALL THE WAY ACROSS THAT LONG BRIDGE . . 273

A RUSTIC COTTAGE EMBOWERED IN FOLIAGE 295

MY FATHER'S GARDEN.

Old Daisy Field Farm.

CHAPTER I.

HOW WE FELL INTO GREAT TROUBLE.

For full a hundred years my father's garden had been in possession of our family, and during all that period no greater change had taken place than such as we see every year in the surrounding foliage, where the young bud pushes out and takes the place of the decaying leaf, which falls and makes room for its successor: so had one generation of our family departed to

be followed by another, all tilling the same soil ever since my great-grandfather cut the first turf in what was then a daisied field. We had in our possession a water-colour drawing of Daisy-Field Farm, as it appeared when my great-grandfather took his first lease of a portion of the ground. The farm-houses, as here seen, consisted of old timbered tenements. We had also writings by us, which I did not understand, showing how lease after lease had been granted and renewed time after time, until at last my grandfather became an annual tenant, at a yearly rental of ten pounds, which sum we continued to pay up to the period when a great alteration was made in my father's garden.

Though the notice was served rather suddenly, we were in some measure prepared for the change, as Surveyors had been taking levels, and making plans, and trampling down our garden-beds for weeks before, without ever even saying "by your leave." The new railway company had obtained an Act of Parliament, with power to pull down all the houses required to make room for the branch line, and to take in three-fourths of my father's garden, which contained exactly one square acre, leaving us only a single rood of ground, excepting what our cottage and outhouses occupied.

My father and I were both at work at the same bed, which we were trenching rather deep for parsnips, when the man served the notice.

"I wonder what he wants, George?" said my father.

I turned to look after him as he went away, saying, "We shall know when we go in to dinner;" and no sooner were the words out of my mouth, than my mother tapped at the window and beckoned my father to come in. After a minute or two the same signal was repeated, and scraping my shoes on

the spade, I went in-doors, when, without a word being spoken, my father placed the printed notice in my hand.

"I thought, from what the Surveyor told me, about a quarter of an acre would be all the company required," I said, folding the paper and placing it on the mantel-piece, thinking it was best out of sight, as we then knew the worst.

I saw the tears in my mother's eyes, as she stood in silence, with her face to the window, so that its sorrowful expression might not be seen by my father.

I went and sat down beside the little couch on which my sister Jane—who had a spinal complaint—always reclined during the daytime, and as she took my hand she pressed it with all her strength, and looked up at me with her large searching eyes, as if imploring me never to forsake them, whatever might happen.

My father threw himself into his old arm-chair, in which he so often indulged in what he called his "forty winks" after a hearty dinner during our busy season, when early rising and hard labour made sweet his brief noontide sleep, while we all moved about the house with muffled footsteps lest we should awake him; and I sighed as I recalled that happy picture and the one then before me. He sat silent, with his elbows resting on the time-polished chair-arms, the upper part of his face buried in the broad palm of his brown, sinewy, hard-working hand; while his lips moved, as if in mental prayer he was seeking help and patience to bear the heavy burthen he must soon bend under. At last he spoke and said, "God's will be done! but it is hard to bear; we had struggling enough to get a bare living off the whole acre, what can we do with a quarter of it? But little more could be got off it than we could consume ourselves. It is hard to bear—very hard—at my time of life."

The hand of my poor afflicted sister trembled as I held it, and her eyes filled with tears, while she controlled herself bravely, and gave no sound to her sorrow.

My mother, who was our great comforter, and always called him "father," came from the window, and placing her hand affectionately on his shoulder, said, in her low sweet voice, "I am thankful, father, that the Company has left us our dear old home, humble though it is, for we have been very happy in it. We are not so badly off as scores of poor people, we well know, will soon be when they pull down the houses that have so long sheltered them, and they will have to seek for other homes among strangers to whom they are unknown. It is hard to lose so much of our dear old garden, but how much harder it would have been to have lost all—be turned out upon the wide world, and left to shift for ourselves as we best could. I should never feel so happy in a grand palace as I do here, under the roof where my dear children were born; where I have watched you while at work, with Jane in my arms, and where my poor mother heaved her last sigh—and—" Her heart was too full to say more, and she leant her head on my father's shoulder and gave vent to her tears, while he held her hand within his own.

I stooped down to kiss my dear sister, then left the room noiselessly, and went out into the garden to think things over to myself.

Though but sixteen, a heartfelt sympathy in our family cares —in the struggles of my industrious father to earn an honest livelihood and pay his way—in the sufferings of my patient sister—in the self-sacrifices my mother made to promote our comforts, without showing a sign of poverty in any way—contributed to make me far more thoughtful and considerate than many youths I knew, who were my seniors. All my life, from

the time I had knowledge and strength to distinguish and pull up a weed, I had been a willing worker in my father's garden —often petitioning for a holiday from school, which he at times reluctantly granted, only that I might help him. And oh! it was reward enough to feel that glow about the heart which fills it with peace and happiness, while folded in a loving mother's arms, or while the manly hand of an approving father rests affectionately on the shoulder, as he gives utterance to warm words because we have done well what it was our duty to do; and more than all, was to see how happy it made my dear sister to repeat all my parents had said in praise of me. Yet one humbled feeling ever remained behind—a regret that I was unable to do more—knowing how hard my dear father had slaved for me all his life, and the good example his ever blameless life placed before me.

Many a time have I stood leaning on my spade watching him with reverential awe, when, after having sown the seed in some bed, he took off his hat, and raised his eyes to Heaven, for I knew he was imploring a blessing on his labour.

His prayer was a trust in God, and mine, that I might prove as good a man as my father.

Neither my mother nor my sister understood the full meaning of that wailing cry, which he had so long concealed, and which seemed to escape his lips unaware, when reeling under the first heavy blow he exclaimed, "We had struggling enough to get a bare living off the whole acre." I had long known it, and, like my father, kept the secret to myself, bearing it as I would have done any other pain, to keep it from falling on either my mother or sister.

I knew that for years things had been getting worse and worse, that houses kept creeping up thicker around us every

way, poisoning the air with smoke, and destroying that free circulation which is so essential to vegetable life, and that we could no longer produce such healthy crops as we had formerly grown.

Our potatoes had long been unsaleable, our summer cabbages were eaten up by caterpillars, our lettuces, as soon as they began to "heart," were filled with the green fly, while our broad and dwarf French beans looked as if sweeps had come into the garden and shaken their soot bags over them, so infested were they with black aphides.

Living, as we did, on the Surrey side of London, and within half an hour's walk of any of the five bridges, had been greatly in our favour, as the principal vegetable markets were so handy to get rid of our produce; but this nearness to London—as land trebled in value, and thousands of new houses were built —shut us up in a more confined space, unfavourable to vegetable life, and that was why we had to struggle harder every year, as our crops became less and less, and the price diminished with the quality.

Still, with every drawback, through skilful management, hard work, strict economy, and an old market-connection, we had hitherto managed to get a living and keep out of debt; but now, as my father exclaimed in that wailing cry, "What could we do with only a single rood of ground, after having to struggle so hard to obtain a livelihood from off the whole acre?"

I cast my eye over the long narrow slip of ground, which I calculated would be about the quarter of an acre left to us after the inclosure, and turned away with a sigh, saying to myself, "What indeed!"

It is very easy to quote old adages about "one door shutting

and another opening," and "the many ways there are of making a loaf of bread," but when there are others to consider, these changes are not so easily accomplished; and there were associations connected with our old cottage and our old garden which could never be renewed if once sundered; and a man like my father, who had always moved in one groove, and had now the burthen of fifty years on his shoulders, and already stooped a little through hard labour, would never be so happy as he had been, if his course of life was much changed.

As for myself—had I been selfish enough to have cared for none beside—I had nothing to fear: young, strong, healthy, and, for my age, a good market-gardener, I could obtain employment anywhere where such work was wanted, and I knew that I had many friends who would willingly recommend me.

But then, what would those dear ones do at home? Would my father be content to potter about the slip of ground we should still retain, and get a few shillings off it in the best way he could? And if so, would the wages I might obtain as a market-gardener, if I took such a situation, "keep the wolf from the door"? I was afraid not; for, young as I then was, I could hardly expect to get more than twelve or fourteen shillings a week for my labour, and in winter-time there would be next to nothing for me to do.

It was all very easy for persons we knew to come in and say that they would have done this, that, and the other with the ground, if they had worked it, and so have made it to pay better than we had ever done. They did not understand what difficulties we had ever to contend against, that we could no more make it produce such crops as once grew upon it, than we could again cover it with the silver-frilled daisies with which

the land was powdered over, when birds built and sang in the green hedgerows that divided the meadows on old Daisy Field Farm. We could no more bring back the fresh air which then blew there than we could remove the thousands of houses which kept it out.

Many may think there was not so much to grieve over, when, after paying all expenses, the profit our garden yielded seldom exceeded sixty pounds a year, on which four of us had to live; but when they consider, at that time, we could not see a way of obtaining more than a fourth of that income in future, they will admit that a gloomy prospect lay before us.

When children gathered flowers on Daisy-Field Farm.

CHAPTER II.

HOW OUR BUSINESS BECAME WORSE AND WORSE.

IT was early in February when we received notice that the new railway company would take possession of three-fourths of my father's garden in the following autumn; leaving us all spring and summer to turn ourselves round in, and to consider what we could do for the best. We went on with our usual labour in the ordinary way, the only difference being that my

father and I spoke seldomer and less cheerfully to one another, when at work together, for the same troubled thoughts were uppermost in both our minds, that we were sowing many of those old familiar garden-beds for the last time. I could not help thinking what a many changes had taken place since the time when children gathered flowers on Daisy-Field Farm, and on the rising ground in the distance—now a street —an old wooden mill was said to have stood. I was very low and sad at heart, as if under every spadeful of earth I was burying for ever something that I had long loved: and what were my father's feelings? But there was no lack of talk within doors, when our daily labour was ended, for both my mother and sister tried their utmost to cheer us up, and when I thought of what Jane suffered, lying there day after day on her back, and ever trying to make us feel happier through looking at the future from a brighter point of view, I often felt ashamed of my own despondency. Still, it grieved us all to see father sitting in his great arm-chair, his face half buried in his hands, often for the hour together, without ever once taking part in our conversation.

Father and I went on with our labour, as, no doubt, we should have done for years to come—(and as he had done throughout the years that had gone)—but for the change that must so soon take place. But there must have been an end to it in time, and I tried to console myself by looking forward and thinking, that the only difference after all was, that the time had arrived sooner than we expected.

When things grow worse every year, while we strain every nerve to make them better, and fail, it is a sure sign that we are struggling against the tide, and must be overwhelmed unless we change our course.

Excepting the rows of open streets, through which a current of air circulated, there was a mile's depth of houses hemming us in on every side, and the smoke from thousands of chimneys, where, in my grandfather's time, there were only long rows of thinly-spread buildings, with open spaces before and behind, that went stretching and melting away into quiet green and more remote suburbs. In the first lease granted to my great-grandfather, as already stated, our garden was named as a portion of land neighbouring upon Daisy-Field Farm. My father used to point out the spot where he remembered seeing, when a boy, a few yards of the original turf that had never been disturbed, and which in spring-time was white over with wild daisies. There was not a single one to be seen anywhere in my father's garden, when I was a little boy.

But the greatest change of all, which I saw clearly enough, though I had not the heart to point it out to my kind father, was the one which, though long on the way, had, unseen by him, so suddenly overtaken us. That was the railways. Through them, tons of vegetables finer than we could now produce, do all we could, were poured into the London markets—often a few hours after they had been gathered in the early morning—and quite as soon as we were able to arrive with our donkey-load, which we commenced gathering at the first faint streak of dawn. From breezy and open garden grounds far away in the sweet green country, the early trains came rushing in, laden with healthy crops, uninfested by the ravages of insects, and unpolluted by the smoke of our three million-peopled city; and I sighed when I saw such splendid plants placed by the side of those I had just delivered, though mine still sparkled with the morning dew.

It required some manœuvring to prevent my father from

being pained by seeing how far we were out-distanced by the country growers, and from hearing the "chaff" which I had to put up with, especially from the sons and assistants of our oldest customers in the market, who, well knowing what I had brought, would say, "You've brought us some fine lettuces this morning, George," and when I said they were summer-cabbages, would pretend to be surprised, and say, "Cabbages, are they? Why look here, these lettuces which were cut this morning, and have just come in by the market-train, are quite as big."

Though such remarks were painful to bear, I was thankful they were not made in the hearing of my father, who fancied that our crops were second to none in quality, though they might be inferior in size. To save my father from feeling this humiliation and suffering under these petty annoyances, I had, through a little scheming, during the last two or three years, gradually installed myself as market-man, by persuading him to lie down again until breakfast-time, while I drove our little load to Covent Garden market; for when the days were longest and the season busiest, we were generally up and in the garden preparing for market before it was well light, or but little more than two or three hours after midnight. It was therefore only necessary for my father to go to market once a week to receive the money for what I had delivered to the wholesale dealers, and as the paymasters were generally the principals of firms that had dealt with us for two or three generations, they respected my father too much to give him pain by making complaints about the quality of our produce, whatever might be their thoughts. With myself they were not so particular, and I felt grateful to them even for that, for what my father would have writhed under I bore patiently with only a few shrugs of the shoulders, or returned with a little good-

humoured banter, which my tormentors liked me all the better for.

There is no stronger proof that we have failed to conquer ourselves, than a display of anger at trifling annoyances that really do us no harm.

All we had long since been able to produce in the way of potatoes, that was marketable, were a few early ash-leaved kidneys, which were very "waxy," and not fit for use if taken out of the ground a couple of days before they were cooked. Even these came in later and later, for a week or two's difference sent down the price to less than half, so that country dealers forestalled the market; for the pureness of the air is of far more value in growing a good potato than the quality of the ground, and for years we had not been able to grow one that we could keep for our own use throughout the winter. In my grandfather's time our garden produced first-class potatoes.

We had studied books and tried all sorts of experiments in agricultural chemistry, and failed; there was no destroying the smoke from myriads of chimneys, and purifying the vitiated air. The first thing we were able to get into the market after the dead winter months was a little forced rhubarb, which required constant covering up and narrowly watching for fear it should bleach. With this we did very well for a few years, until the country growers took to sending in the same article much earlier, twice the size, and at a lower price.

Our spring salads, fresh gathered every morning, had been very profitable, through growing a few hardy onions, lettuces, radishes, and mint under the frames, with successive crops of mustard and cress, and a few young beet-roots, most of them autumn sown, and in great demand at the hotels when spring-

lamb first came in, but not to be named beside what the railways now brought to market, twice the size, much tenderer, and half the price.

As for winter greens—though we did not transplant them from where they had been "pricked" out, when first taken from the seed-beds, and even then so late in summer that there was no chance of getting the slightest crop of anything else off the ground into which we "dibbled" them—they yielded but a poor profit; for few, unless they have tried it, are aware what an immense space of ground has to be covered to grow as many greens as will bring in a sovereign.

Savoys, the hardiest of all our winter greens, must be set at the very least two feet apart, to get them any size, and poor people grumble if they cannot get one to fill the pot for a penny or three-halfpence. Some of the heads that the railway brought in from the country seemed as if they could only be boiled whole in coppers, which they were at the large eating-houses; and ours stood no chance beside them.

Cabbage-plants, each bunch containing a dozen, and selling at four and five shillings the dozen bunches at the best of times, wholesale in the market, left a gap in the ground where only a single crown's worth had been cut, quite large enough to build a house on. In the country, where land was cheap, space was of little consequence, while with us a pound's worth of cabbage-plants pulled up in winter made a vast clearance in my father's garden.

Spinach—which my father said a few years ago was considered a great luxury, and paid well when taken to market on the morning it was cut—was now brought from the country in loads, like green-meat for horses, and was sold by the hawkers in the streets, with leaves as large again as we were able to grow

them. Nor could we any longer produce such fine bunches of asparagus as we had done, for the old beds had grown out of all heart, and the new ones hardly paid for the extra cost and labour, and when placed beside such bundles as now came to market, looked like what they really were—in a state of decline.

We were still able to produce peas as fine as ever, and of better quality than were ever planted in former years, but they had to be put in so early and came off so late, that the ground could only be used for winter greens after the crops were gathered.

We had a few old retail customers, who came and waited, or sent their servants, to see that the peas were fresh pulled, and who never begrudged paying a shilling a peck to have them fresh gathered. Such as these would not mind paying a penny or three-halfpence for a newly-cut lettuce, when the street-hawkers were crying them at four heads a penny. But a dry season made sad havoc with our pea crops, for all the watering in the world would not restore that moisture to the air which rain gave, and was so beneficial to the pods. Fine as our peas were, we could not obtain more than the fair market price for them, which was very little compared with what it had been formerly, as the luggage trains poured thousands of sacks into the market of a morning, which had been gathered miles away only the day before.

I had always kept my eyes wide open, and looked sharply about me, and noticed how few carts and waggons came to market from any great distance, compared with the number on which I used to read the names when I was a little boy, and stood waiting about for my father. The horses and drivers of many of these used to come into the market tired, dusty, and

travel-stained, through having been on the road from an early hour on the previous evening and through all the long night; and in addition to the keep of horses and the wages of men, there were toll-gates to pay, and other expenses, which could only be covered through the vegetables fetching a good price. Now, all was altered—the crops were thrown into the railway trains, and were in London in next to no time compared with former locomotion; while at the station there were crowds of carmen with vans and carts, ready to carry the loads, the short distance between the station and the London markets, for almost any sum that might be offered.

A few of the old market-gardeners, whom we knew well, and whose grounds were within five or six miles of the markets, said it would never pay them to cart their vegetables to London now, were it not for the cheap loads of rich manure the men brought back along with the empty baskets.

Carrots, radishes, and onions we did pretty well with while they were young; but when the latter came to be sold in the market by the bushel, and the former by the hundred-weight, we could count the whole produce of large beds in shillings, while the buyers would hardly look at the onions, when the market was glutted with those that had been imported from Portugal and other places.

Celery, cucumbers, marrow-fats, and such things as required to be grown under frames, were very expensive to rear, on account of the heat required; and even the celery cost a deal of labour, and occupied a great space of ground, through the width between the trenches. Market-gardening was hard work, and badly paid for, with all these drawbacks.

To sum up all, without giving a long catalogue of everything we grew, I had long been convinced that our business had

"Market Gardening was hard work." Chap. 2, p. 19.

become worse and worse, and that many of our best wholesale customers only dealt with us out of respect to so old a family, and because our name had been found in the books kept by some of their grandfathers.

There must have been an end to such a state of things sooner or later, though I earnestly prayed that no great change for the worse might come upon us in my father's time. How blind I was to the future!

Many a time had I felt my face burn on a cold day in winter, when, in delivering my neatly-packed bundles of celery, the great wholesale dealer would look at them and say, "Why, George, my lad, I shall never be able to sell these, only to cut up and be put into soup: this is what's wanted to be placed on a table in these days," showing me a head of celery as long as his arm, and quite as thick, and such as we could not have grown in our ground had he offered us a guinea a head for it.

It was soon whispered in the market that we were about to lose our garden, and that we were bringing in the last crops we should ever get in any quantity off the ground; and even those who were kindly disposed to us said, "the day was gone by for market-gardening so near London, that we must get further out, and we should do better, and that we couldn't do much worse than we had been doing if we had sown the ground with mangold-wurzel, and left it to take its chance, instead of slaving so hard as we had done."

There was much truth in these sayings; but then, though so poor, we were somehow contented, for my dear mother's attachment to the old homestead caused me to keep silent many an aspiring wish, lest it should give her pain to think that I repined at our humble position.

One thing was clear enough, we couldn't have carried on much longer, however much harder we might have worked, without still "going to the bad," and coming at last to the worst; and there were moments when I felt almost thankful that we had so suddenly come to the worst; for it saddened the heart to know that at the end of every week's labour we had only drifted nearer it. I even began to be a believer in the old adage, that "when things come to the worst they will soon mend."

I went to one or two pic-nics in the woods.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE WE WATCH THE END, MOTHER SEES A NEW BEGINNING.

As I had but little to do that summer, I joined several holiday parties, and went to one or two pic-nics in the woods, out by Penge, for we knew a many people who, like us, were interested in the changes the railway company was about to make, and who were always talking about the compensation

they should expect; and my mother, seeing it annoyed my father, advised me to go with them, saying, in her homely Doric, "Go and hear what they have to say, out of father's hearing; you have nothing particular to do." So I did, very often against my will.

My father was a thoroughly honest and conscientious man, and when these friends, acquaintances, and customers—for we had still many visitors all that summer—dropped into the garden, and began talking about the heavy compensation he ought to claim, he would thrust his spade into the ground, straighten his back, and say, "I am but a yearly tenant; there is no crop on the ground to destroy—that I get off; nothing to remove but three or four old fruit trees that seldom bear, and a dozen or two of gooseberry and currant bushes; what compensation can I claim for those? I have seen the Directors, and agreed to leave all compensation to their generosity; and though they cannot allow me to retain more than a rood of land, they have behaved handsomely, and already accepted me as tenant, at a yearly rental of five pounds." He scorned the very thought of putting in an extortionate claim, which too many of these advisers were attempting to enforce, and I was proud of him for so doing. Still I kept on friendly terms with them.

As our tenure drew nearer to a close, and we had no preparation to make for another season, except on the small piece of ground they had left us, my father became more communicative, especially when we were left to ourselves. "Those persons you go out with, who seem so anxious, George, that we should become gainers instead of losers through having to give up our garden, care a great deal more about raising a large party to join them in their unreasonable claims than they do for each other's interests. I should be ashamed to be one of them.

They will gain nothing by it. Never, my lad, however old you may live to be, do anything mean or dishonourable; you will gain nothing by it in the end, however profitable it may appear for the moment. Never do a thing that your conscience disapproves of, for that is a monitor that our Good God has placed within us all, and which never fails to rise up and accuse us when we are about to do that which is wrong." And he took off his hat reverentially, as he always did, even in the coldest day in winter, when he stood in the open air and gave utterance to that Holy Name. After that I went to no more picnics with them.

"We must try and let the bit of ground to somebody who has a fancy for gardening," he said, on another occasion; "there are plenty of people who will be glad to rent it, if it be only to grow a few flowers for their own amusement. We must not waste our time over it, but look out for something to do. I know it will go hard with me on first turning servant, after having been my own master for so many years, for we got a living, though a poor one, off this dear old ground, and always managed to pay our way, through your dear mother's excellent management, Heaven bless her! And I will work these old fingers a little nearer to the bone before I will see either her or your poor sister deprived of those few comforts they have so long been used to." His voice faltered, and he turned aside his head to conceal the tears which he could not control, at the thought that my mother and sister might, through the loss of our garden, have to submit to privations which hitherto they had never endured.

"Look how poor and hungry the land's got, father," I ventured to say, "in spite of the loads of manure we every year put into it. Scarcely a bit of it has ever laid fallow for more

than a month or two, except in winter. It has had very little rest ever since it was first a garden-ground. We never could have got such crops off it as we have done."

"Neither can I ever do the work again that I have done," said my father, with a sigh. "When a man has turned fifty, my lad, and all his life has been spent in hard work—stooping, digging, and wheeling in all sorts of weather—getting one cold on the top of another, and never even able to lay up for a day, excepting Sunday—it tells on him in time; and I begin to feel, George, that I am not the man I was. And though I wouldn't say so to your mother, for it would make her more unhappy than she is, it will ease my mind a bit to tell thee that I feel the loss of our garden more than I ever felt the loss of anything in my life before. I begin to want rest."

"You mustn't be cast down, father," I said, speaking far more cheerfully than I felt; "you have worked hard for us all your life, and, as everybody says who has known you, 'never had an idle bone in your body.' Now it's my turn; and you know what dear mother says, 'there's always work to be found by those who are willing to do it;' and I am both able and willing. I have spoken to two or three of our old customers in the market, and they promised to be on the look-out for me. I shall find something, never fear, and be able before long on a Saturday night to throw a good week's wages into mother's lap, as you have always done your market money."

I will not write down what my father said in my praise; it is enough to state that he was satisfied that I had always done my duty, and had been a great help and comfort to him. I needed no telling how deeply he felt the loss of so much of our garden—though I was glad he had unburthened his mind to me, and made me a sharer of his troubles; I saw it in his

looks, in his altered manner, in. the way he walked up and down the long garden-path, often with his hands behind him, as if he had no longer any use for them, after we had got in the last of our crops.

The ever-watchful eye of my loving mother saw it too; and, without seeming to notice it, I often saw her turn away from the window with a sigh, after she had stood observing my father's movements.

We had long since done all that could be done with the rood of ground that was left us, and having had such early notice, had taken care to keep it stocked with such things as would bring in a few shillings up to the very end of winter —such as hardy greens, celery, parsnips, horse-radish, carefully-sheltered parsley, and similar vegetables, which I thought might bring us a few pounds, if they were not cut off by frost. There was nothing more for either of us to do about the ground.

We had dug up our few gooseberry and currant bushes, and, as gardeners call it, "laid them in by the heels," which is digging a hole in the ground, laying them down, and covering the roots well with earth, half a dozen or more together, for we thought we might find a customer for them, as autumn is the best time for transplanting. The rhubarb, like the horse-radish, fortunately stood in that part of the garden which we still retained. There was nothing more that either I or my father could do in the garden, though I still continued to take a few things to market once or twice a week; so we often both stood idle for the hour together, watching the labourers digging deep down into the lower part of the ground, where the piers of the railway arches were to stand.

We had cleared the ground a month before the notice had expired which gave the railway company power to take pos-

session of three-fourths of my father's garden—a space of ground considerably broader than that taken in for the principal portion of the line—in the expectation that it would be required for a station. Our right of way was to run under one of the new railway arches, in a direct line from our rood of ground, which, like our dear old cottage, fronted the sunny south, so that we had the sunshine before us all day long; the gold of Heaven, which God in His goodness showers down alike upon rich and poor, would still fall upon the old-fashioned windows, and dance through the quivering leaves upon the cottage floor, and on the face of my poor dear sister Jane, while she lay on her back watching it as the shadows of the foliage of the grape-vine chequered her wan cheeks.

There was no high upper story, and that was some comfort, as mother used to say, in case of fire, as the windows were so near the ground, we had only to push them open and step outside if we couldn't reach the doors. The cottage and the outhouses, which had been added time after time by loving hands now cold in the grave, occupied nearly the whole width of my father's garden, without encroaching on the measured rood of ground which was still our own, and in a portion of which we always grew a few of my dear mother's favourite flowers. Before the door stood a few standard roses, the blooms from which had often been gathered, in the years that had departed, to be placed by loving hands, under the pattering of falling tears, in the coffins of those "*whose place would know them no more for ever*"—those who had

"Tilled the earth, and slept beneath it."

Many a time had I looked at them in the sunlight that flooded

our old windows, through the golden glory that surrounded my beloved mother, as she stood snipping off the full-blown flowers to ornament our parlour, and prayed to God that He would give me health and strength to keep the old roof over their heads, until I—the tears fell and blinded me, at the thought that if my prayers were fulfilled—that if God granted all I asked of Him—the time would come, sooner or later, when, with trembling hands, I should place roses around those beloved faces and in those ice-cold hands. But beyond this I was strong enough to look and see that certain light which brightened the border of the grave, like a bank of flowers before a dark evergreen shrubbery; and there was comfort in the thought that their blameless lives would leave behind a fragrant memory, which would

"Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

It was a dull, drizzling day in autumn when the labourers put up the last of the temporary "stoup-and-rail" fence that shut us out for ever from the largest portion of my father's garden. We both stood watching the men in the deepening twilight, while gushes of wind drove the drizzling rain in our faces, carrying away the dead leaves to mingle with the piles of rubbish that had been thrown up in digging the foundations for the railway piers. They had gone far down below the mould into the yellow gravel, which very probably had never been disturbed before, since the Surrey side of London and the Strand was a vast sheet of water, with no river-course distinguishable between the high ground on which the City now stands and the green slopes of the Surrey hills. Not a vestige of our neatly-kept garden-beds was to be seen; nothing but piles of earth and gravel, and upturned barrows, and felled

trees, the foliage of which was blowing about in whirling eddies, as if seeking in vain for a last resting-place.

My father turned away with his hands behind his back, and, heaving a deep sigh, said, "It's hard to bear, George. Every foot of it was as familiar to me as our old hearth is." And he went into the cottage without ever once raising his eyes from the ground.

That sigh was responded by my mother, who had come up and stood behind us unnoticed, for it was now nearly dark, and she had also been watching the men putting up the last portion of the fence, and had not spoken a word. My father had gone in without seeing her.

My mother came closer to me, and placing her hand on my shoulder, said, in a voice that told how much she felt, through its tremulousness, "Can't you set about doing something, George, that would occupy father's mind, and cheer him up a bit? He has been a stirring man all his days, and I can see that the do-nothing kind of life he is now leading is eating into his heart. There are a good many lights and frames and things about, and you can buy glass now for about three-halfpence a foot: couldn't you run up some sort of a greenhouse, and grow a few flowers in it? They always meet with a ready sale. It would amuse father."

I told her I would see what could be done in the morning, and, kissing me affectionately, she went indoors to my father.

The old Elizabethan Manor-House.

CHAPTER IV.

I MEET DIFFICULTY FACE TO FACE.

How late I should have continued pacing the new path we had made along the whole extent of our little rood of ground on that night I cannot tell; so much was my mind occupied with the plan my mother had proposed that I was unconscious of the time that had passed away since she left me, until my reverie was broken by being called in to supper.

"Why, George, you are quite wet," said my mother, taking hold of my jacket-sleeve, and making me take it off and change it; "you surely haven't been in the garden all this time? Why it's more than two hours since I came in."

I had neither felt nor noticed the slow drizzling rain, so busy had I been building "castles in the air"—covering our rood of ground with greenhouses, and filling them with flowers, and astonishing the florists in Covent Garden Market with the beauty of the bloom. My dear sister Jane told me afterwards that my brains had gone a "wool-gathering" that night, as from the replies I made to their remarks it was evident to her that I had paid no attention to what they were talking about. I remember my fancy picturing great beds of scarlet geraniums, trusses of verbena-bloom, and golden masses of calceolaria, in the fire, while munching my bread and cheese, and thinking how much prouder I should be if I succeeded in showing long rows of them in bloom under glass, than ever I had been of the finest vegetables we had ever grown. The difficulties which my calmer reason had told me at intervals were almost overwhelming, were driven down and glided over by the surgings of hope, as the mind hurried on to the wished-for end; and I felt all in a glow of delight at the thought that I might yet be able to make this paltry portion of my father's garden more profitable than the whole had ever been to us.

What a wise provision of Providence that is, which conceals so many of the difficulties which beset our future course, permitting them only to appear singly as we arrive at them, instead of displaying the whole at once to dishearten us. Had I, as I lay awake and happy nearly the whole of that long night, seen how much I should have had to contend against, I

should have been discouraged from ever attempting to erect greenhouses or grow flowers on the morsel of ground left us by the railway company.

I had been a good deal about among gardeners at one time and another, for we often had orders for "plants," as flowers are called in the trade, from our retail customers, and I had frequently seen the whole process, from first taking off the cuttings, to "striking" them and putting the young plants into pots, and I was well aware that nothing could be done without heat. I arose early on the following morning, and looked about to see what was left of the wreck, and was glad to find so many frames, which had been put aside in a shed at the end of the cottage to keep the glass from getting broken. They had not been used much of late years, as we had given up growing cucumbers and several other vegetables that require glazed lights to protect them, being only used at last for a few things that we wanted to get a little forward to plant out early in spring. I examined them carefully, and saw that all the use I could make of them would be as "cold lights" to keep plants under when they were strong enough in the pots to be removed from a greenhouse, but that they would be of no use at all in assisting me to make one the size I should require. In addition to these frames, there was an immense stock of bricks, which had formed the whole of the long wall that enclosed the bottom of my father's garden, and which we had taken down and wheeled away, the railway company claiming only the ground. "There are plenty of bricks, at all events, to build the two long low walls I shall require to support the strong rafters my steep glass roof will rest upon," I said to myself, "and to make a flue to heat my greenhouse, beside. What a good job it is that the builder I went to did not come

to look at them as he promised; he might have had them for an old song, almost."

Some years before, my father had bought a quantity of light fir "quartering," for a few shillings, which had supported the roof of a row of cow-sheds, intending them for firewood. By some oversight they had never been used nor moved since the day the sheds were taken down to make room for new buildings close behind us, when they were piled up in our large outhouse, and were all as sound as on the day they were first brought in. "There are the rafters and bricks for my greenhouse," I said to myself, as delighted as if I had dug up some long-buried treasure. "I have but the glass and the light wood for the sliding-frames—which I can make myself—to find, and those things will not cost much. I will commence with a greenhouse thirty feet long, and as wide as the length of the rafters will allow; and if I succeed, will add others in time, until I have nearly the whole rood of ground under glass."

While I was hunting about, my father poked his head into the large outhouse to tell me breakfast was ready, and seeing me so busy turning things over, he said, "Whatever art thou rummaging about there for, George?"

"You will see very soon, father," I replied. "I want you to get a customer for that large bed of parsnips as soon as ever you can. Will you find one? I want the ground."

"Want the ground, do you?" said my father. "Some little plot between thee and mother, I'll warrant. Yes; I'll find a customer for the crop of parsnips, though it would fetch a little more in another month or so. But come into breakfast, my lad; mother's waiting."

After breakfast my father put on his hat, and, looking with a smile at my mother, said, "George has found a job for me

this morning, mother; he wants the ground cleared of the parsnips, and I am going to find a customer. I suppose I shall know why he wants the crop off so soon, if I live long enough. But I am glad he has found me something to do, anyhow, for I'm sick of this idle life. Don't wait dinner for me; I can get a glass of ale and a crust of bread and cheese somewhere, for a snack, among my old friends, if I shouldn't be back in time." He kissed Jane, who was propped up on her pillows, by the aid of the cranks which raised her head without disturbing her when she took her meals, and went his way.

No sooner was the door closed on my father than I said, "Mother, how much money can you spare me to build a greenhouse to grow flowers in?"

"It will be very little, George, I'm afraid," replied my mother, looking very thoughtful. "If we had the early spring crops to fall back upon, as we have had for years, I could almost tell to a few shillings how much I could spare until the forced rhubarb, and the first salads and spinach came in to replenish my low purse, which I always prevented from becoming quite empty during the winter. How much shall you want?"

"I must have several hundred feet of glass," I replied, "if I make a house of any size. Pots take up a good deal of room, and the roof will be the principal expense. I think I can manage all the rest, with very little assistance. Glass costs about fourteen shillings the hundred superficial feet: they keep it packed up and ready cut in hundred-feet boxes. I must have glass to start with. I feel confident, mother, that if I can run up a greenhouse or two, I shall be able in time to get more money off the bit of ground I cover in than was ever got, of late years, off the whole of my father's garden."

"Oh, let him have my money, mother—all I have in the savings bank; there's above ten pounds—let him have it all," exclaimed my sister Jane. "I'm sure he'll succeed—I know he will, for I've often laid here and thought that money would be wanted for something some day or another, and that was why I never would draw out a shilling. I feel, mother, that the time has come, and that a blessing will accompany it. George never yet undertook to do anything that he failed in. Let him have my money, dear mother, and though I cannot help him in any other way, I will pray for his success." She put out her hand, and fairly broke down when I took it, as she added, "You have ever been a dear, good, loving brother to me, George, and were it ten times the amount, you should have it all." She soon dried her tears, and with a bright smile said, "Oh, George, make the greenhouse door wide enough for me to be wheeled in on my little cot; the castors are quite strong enough; and I am sure I should soon get well, lying there with all the beautiful flowers about me, and with the sun shining on me through the clear glass."

I promised that the doorway should be wide enough to admit the iron cot, and that there should be no projecting threshold to jolt her, but all so smooth and even that I should be able to wheel her in and out if she were asleep without waking her. Ever since she was ten years old—and she was only two years younger than myself—a shilling a week had been deposited for her in the savings bank, without a single omission, and I felt as if accepting a solemn trust on her behalf when I consented to receive the money—felt as if a blessing would accompany it for her dear sake.

I calculated that, if everything went on prosperously, the most I could expect in the shape of return for the outlay and

labour, would be from a few "bedding-out plants" rather late in the spring, for I had no doubt, well-known and respected as my father was, he would obtain plenty of cuttings for me for nothing when he went round among his friends, for no class of men are kinder to one another than gardeners, or readier to help each other to a job of work. My father had a friend who was head gardener at an old Elizabethan Manor-house in Surrey, and through him knew I should get cuttings of choice geraniums, though I little dreamed then of what he had in store for me.

Nor was it from this old garden alone that he afterwards obtained me such choice cuttings, for there were many others in which gardeners were employed, old and young, some of whom had known my grandfather, and had been companions of my father when he was a young man; and chief amongst these friends was Mr. Rose, who had always been kind to me, though many said he was a hard-headed, money-making man. But it was the old Elizabethan Manor-house I had such cause to remember, as will be seen when I enter the ring to wrestle against Poverty, for it was the aid that I derived from old garden which enabled me to gain my first victory.

My mother was greatly pleased when I told her I had found wood enough in the outhouse for the rafters and shelves to stand the pots on; and that there were bricks enough to build two or three greenhouses, and that all I should have to buy would be a few deals to saw up for the lights, which I could make myself, as they only required to be true, with a rebate for the glass to rest on, as they could be fastened together with nails. She knew it was not the first time I had made a frame, though my earliest attempt had been a failure. I had to use putty pretty freely where I had put in my long bars a little out of the square.

"I shall want a stove for the stoke-hole," I said; "so when you go out, mother, keep your eye on the old iron shops. A second-hand one may be picked up for a trifle."

"You will want a many more things than you know of at present, before you have finished," said my mother. "I have always found it so in every new undertaking, so for the next six months to come I shall feel well both sides of every shilling before I change one, for you shall have every sixpence I can spare you, George, and it is those little dribs and drabs of money you will be the most pushed for when you come near the finish."

"I shall have to buy lime," I replied; "sand I can riddle out of the gravel the men have thrown up in digging the foundation of the railway piers. Jane's money will be sufficient for the principal outlay; and, as for the rest, I can manage, never fear. I know when my greenhouse is finished my credit will be good at plenty of places for as many 'casts' of flower-pots as I shall want at first. All I fear is that father will look unfavourably on my undertaking."

"There you are wrong, George," answered my mother; "you will find father ready enough to lend you a helping hand. Look how cheerfully he has set about finding a customer for the parsnips, well knowing that they can only be got rid of at a sacrifice, as they are too early by a month at least for the regular market. All he said to me was, 'I suppose, this is some little secret between you and George.' Though your father is not a man who says much at times, he thinks a great deal, and I fear I should only make you vain were I to tell you how highly he rates your judgment."

"That he does," said my sister; "I often hear him praise you before mother when they think I'm asleep and not

listening. Oh, I am so glad you will both find plenty to do, without taking situations! The house would seem so lonely if you were both away. Would it not, mother?"

My father had several joiner's tools, which he had picked up cheap at second-hand shops at various times, and he also knew how to use them. He had fitted up a bench in the outhouse, and almost from the time I was big enough to reach it, I tried to plane, saw, use his chisels and gouges, and got many a cut in the fingers through my carelessness. As I grew older, I could always manage to find something to do at the bench during the slack time of winter. I made frames for two engravings, a box for my clothes, and a new barrow to an old wheel.

There was always something or another wanted "botching up a bit," as my father called it, and I could at this time do more than "botch," and so use the plane that my work would stand the test of the straight-edge or square, when placed on it. As my father used to say, "it would never have paid to employ a joiner or carpenter every time we wanted something doing," for our donkey-cart, truck, and barrows were constantly under repair in turns, and as our cottage, consisting of four or five rooms, was very old, and built principally of wood, repairs were frequently required. I had made a new front door, void it is true of ornamental panelling, but strong, solid, and a capital fit, and through which not a draught of air could enter, unless it came in at the keyhole.

As for lights for my greenhouse, they were straightforward work enough, requiring only accurate measurement, and no cross bars like window-sashes, with their difficult mitre-joints, but only a plain rebate or "rabbet," as joiners call it, in the long straight bars, all running in one direction, for the glass to rest upon and the rain to run off without interruption.

People may say what they like against confidence, but it is a great Encourager, making you feel sure that you can do a thing when you once set earnestly about it. Confidence is a battle half won before you commence it. As we had a treddle to our old grindstone, worked by the foot, and requiring no one to turn, I set to and ground the whole of my father's tools, and had only just finished when he returned with the welcome tidings that he had sold the large bed of parsnips.

Breakfast in Mr. Rose's Garden, with his Daughter.

CHAPTER V.

HOW WITH A LITTLE HELP I PUT UP MY GREENHOUSE.

ONE thing gave me great encouragement before I made a beginning, and that was Mr. Rose, the great florist, had spoken favourably of my plan to my mother, and said he would do all

he could for me; and I knew he was a kind gentleman, for when I went to see him at his great country-house, some years before, he made me have breakfast with his pretty little daughter, under a tree in his great garden.

Having obtained a pane of glass of the same size as that cut into squares and sold in one hundred feet boxes for greenhouses, I sat down and made a calculation of the number of lights, and the squares of glass each would contain of a proportionate length and width, without waste. Having decided that my greenhouse should be a little over thirty feet in length, by ten feet wide or thereabout, I found the squares of glass seven inches wide and nine inches long, and calculated that allowing four inches on each side as the width of the wood for the frame—which was almost too much—it would take four panes of glass in width and six squares of nine inches in length, for a light five feet long by three feet wide, which would be allowing six inches for the width of the wood, at each end of the frame. I would rather the wood for the sides of my frames had been a little narrower, but as I based my calculation on the glass—my greatest outlay—I decided that the most economical way to go to work would be that of making three-feet lights five feet long, twelve of which would cover in a greenhouse a dozen yards in length. I made allowance for the sloping of the roof, and found that if I brought down boards from the ridge-piece to which the upper part of the rafters would be fastened, my five-feet lights would be long enough, as there was no necessity to have glass exactly over the walk, which would run along the centre of my greenhouse. Thin boards run along lengthways would make a shade overhead, and my sister smiled when I told her I had devised a plan that would save much glass, and make a shade over her face

when I wheeled her into the greenhouse, for which purpose I intended leaving the passage in the centre a yard wide, when I should have three feet six inches on each side, on which to stow my flower-pots, which would be space enough for many hundreds of dozens in small "thumb" pots.

As the old rafters which had come off the cow-shed were strong pieces of quartering, I resolved before putting them up to cut a pretty deep rebate on each side, so as to keep my frames in their places, and allow them to be pushed up and down easily when I wanted to open the lights to let in air, which could be done without any trouble if I cut a deep square smooth channel on each side of the rafters, and would be much stronger than nailing on slips for the rebates.

I found a couple of doors, which would do capitally for each end of my greenhouse, by widening one to make room for Jane's coach, as we now began to call her cot, and the little building I was planning, her new coach-house. The interest my dear sister took in my calculations and movements was a great encouragement to me, and my dear mother remarked, that never since she was first afflicted had she seemed so cheerful, or looked so well. Even my father, though rather a grave and silent man, and having no faith at all in my success, as I believed, was still willing to help me in every way that he could, and as he continually found something to do, he also became more like himself, and no longer went moping about as he had done at the close of summer, with his hands behind him. Very often he would make us all merry—when he had finished something he had been employed upon—by touching the front of his hat-rim with his thumb and finger, and saying to me, "Please, master, what is to be my next job?"

The first thing we did after getting rid of the crop of

parsnips, was to ram the ground hard down to make it solid; then cover it with three or four inches of gravel—loads of which the railway labourers had thrown up, then press it well down with our heaviest garden roller until it was hard and smooth almost as a stone floor. While father rolled in the gravel, I dug a pit a full yard deep for the stoke-hole, in which was to be placed the furnace.

The next job was to build two walls, thirty-six feet long and three feet high. As one of my companions was the son of a bricklayer, I had laid many a brick at different times, when I had gone to call on him, while he was at work, so that, having once laid my foundation, I found no difficulty in working up to my square and line, and building a three-foot wall. I purchased my lime of his father, who charged me but sixpence a bushel for it, and as for sand, that I riddled from out of the gravel.

My father picked up a second-hand furnace for a trifle, which the young bricklayer fixed for me of a night after he had done his day's work,—for it required more skill to form the bend of the flue, to ensure a draught, than I was master of. That done, to run a square brick flue the whole length of the greenhouse was easy work enough for me even, and he came again and gave me a little help in finishing the chimneys. That was all the assistance I required.

Running the whole length of the top of the walls were pieces of square quartering, let well into the brickwork, on which to fasten down into mortices the lower end of the rafters, which were up before the end of a month, for I thought we could make the lights in the outhouse during the winter months, if we ran up the skeleton of the greenhouse while the weather was fine. This we did, even to finishing the flue and chimneys, and gave three cheers when we lit a fire, and saw

how beautifully it drew, in which we were joined by the railway labourers, whom I treated to a little beer, as they had kindly assisted me in wheeling up the gravel, and riddling it.

My mother had thrown open the window, and wheeled my sister's cot close beside it, so that by raising her arm she was able to wave a red silk handkerchief outside, as she said she should if the flue acted.

We had succeeded in the first great essential in growing flowers, which is heat, for without that "cuttings" cannot be struck, and there are dozens of flues built that never properly answer; while the fire went roaring through mine as if it had been a foundry furnace, and the bricks were soon too hot for any of us to place our hands on them beyond a few seconds, without pain.

"You've done a great feat between you," said my father, drawing his fingers pretty sharply from the flue; "why, you'll make your silver sand for 'striking' as hot here as if it were just lifted from the top of an African desert."

My father did not know, though I did, that if cuttings had been placed in sand in such a heat, and so near the flue, without a layer of peat or moist bark between, all the roots would have been burnt off, if they ever had any, and all the life in the tiny stems baked out of them.

Heavy as would be the weight of my twenty-four lights—twelve on each side—with the glass and frames, when put up, I could not have a tie-beam, which is the chief support of a roof, not only because it spans across and forms the strong base of the triangle on which the two rafters rest in the form of an inverted Λ, but also serves to support a centre post if necessary—that is, one rising from the middle of the tie-beam, and supporting both the upper points of the inverted letter, or the

rafters where they joined, and pressed against the ridge pieces. A tie-beam spanning across would have prevented my passing up and down the middle of the greenhouse, unless I had stooped or crept along the floor between every brace of rafters. Had I done so myself, I could not have expected my customers, when they came to look at my flowers, to have moved up and down under the same inconvenience, especially if they were ladies.

To support the roof, without either tie-beam or king-post, I got twenty-four strong pieces of quartering, twelve for each side, and these I let into the ground, at one end, and at the other sawed them in a slanting direction, which caused them to press tight inside the sloping rafters to which they were secured, each a yard apart, which was the width of the passage that would extend the whole length of my greenhouse.

These strong posts also served to support the broad stage on which my pots were to stand, which was three feet six inches in depth, one end coming down nearly a foot lower than the wall, so that the plants at the back might not touch the glass at the lower slope of the lights. I also saw that they might be made to support shelves nearer the centre of the roof, along which small plants might be placed down the whole length of the building on both sides; for I knew that with heat and glass there would not be an inch wasted but what would grow a flower, if there was only room enough for a pot to stand.

The ridge-piece, which, as its name implies, run the whole length of the high point of the roof, and supported the ends of the two rafters, which were securely clamped to it, was very deep and strong, so as to give the principals a broad hold; and I should not, so far as strength went, have feared their giving way under a heavy barrow-load of mould, if, instead of

"The far-away country where children play on the village-green." Chap. 5, p. 43.

the sharp narrow ridge I could have obtained foothold broad enough to have wheeled one across.

"Your greenhouse will stand long enough, George," said my father, "if it does nothing else."

Besides helping me to make the lights, my father had been out a good deal among gardeners, who were old friends; and not only had he obtained promises of old "stock plants" as soon as I was ready to house them, but also quantities of young cuttings that would come in in time enough for "bedding" plants if potted by February, as they would be ready then by May.

Such a bright prospect caused me to work early and late, and to get a glazier's apprentice to help me—after his day's work was done—to glaze the lights, for he was thankful to earn four or five shillings a week over hours for a little pocket-money, and I found time was a great object, and that if I strived my hardest I should have plants, to sell, almost as soon as we had been able to take our earliest crops of vegetables to market.

I had already got credit for as many "casts" of pots as would bring me in nearly fifty pounds, if I could find plants enough to fill them, and the flowers were all sold. They stood me in a little over two shillings a "cast," which contained sixty pots, so that I should have to pot and sell some few hundreds of dozens to raise that large amount, as three shillings a dozen for bedding plants was all I could expect to get in the trade.

I got in a couple of loads of beautiful peat-mould, for potting, from the far-away country, where children play on the village-green, which smelt like a nosegay when turned over, it was so sweet and fresh. Bark was very cheap, and of silver sand I required very little at first.

My father had quite enough to do in going about seeing after

such things as these, and in helping to get them in when they were delivered. He was also a capital putty-maker, and both made the paint and painted the lights.

The flue—the most difficult part of my building operations—acting as it did, gave him, I believe, stronger faith in the success of my undertaking.

There could be no greater proof of the high esteem in which he was held than the readiness shown by all his friends to give us supplies of "stock" plants and cuttings. Even the large flower-salesmen of Covent Garden Market spoke to the florists who supplied them, and they offered to assist us to make a start in our new line, willingly.

No money could have purchased what I had cheerfully given to me out of respect to my father and the old standing of our family. Cuttings are things that flower-growers rarely sell; they either throw them away when they have too many, or exchange, or give them to their friends. By the first of January my glass roof was on, my doors hung, my stage fixed, and I was ready, after little more than three months' hard labour, for the plants our friends had given us.

My Father's pleasant walks through a shady wood.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW I MANAGED MY "CUTTINGS," AND FILLED MY GREENHOUSE WITH PLANTS.

IT would have been too great a digression to have explained how my young friend the bricklayer, before finishing the chimneys, made me what gardeners call a "striking-pit," by raising and widening that part of the flue which was nearest the chimney and farthest from the furnace, being placed at the opposite end of the greenhouse. This he did by building me what he called a heat-chamber, and which—though still forming a part of the flue—was as wide and high, and as long again, as a good-sized square kitchen-dresser, and nearly on a level with my greenhouse-walls. Beyond it, and near to the chimney, he made a narrow opening, and put in an iron damper, by

which I could regulate the heat—either letting it escape up the chimney, or making the top of my striking-pit too hot to place the hand on. This square corner of the greenhouse was my work-table; on it I had to raise my flowers, from cuttings that were often no longer than my little finger—and if they were verbenas, no thicker than a lady's knitting-needle; and this I did through strewing my table with well-rotted manure, moist bark, and over that a covering of smooth silver sand, an inch or two thick; and which, when properly heated, caused the cuttings to strike in a few hours, and be strong enough to move out of the sand into small "thumb pots" by the end of a week, and sometimes before.

Nothing is easier to strike than cuttings; the difficulty is to keep them alive, and make them grow into fine plants after they have struck, especially throughout the winter; and this can only be done under glass, and with heat. Any shallow pan, like the saucers in which flower-pots stand, will do to strike cuttings in, if filled with silver sand, and left to stand in a warm place. All that is required is to cut off as many shoots as you can from either a geranium, fuschia, verbena, calceolaria, or almost any other branching flower, and many good-sized plants will yield a score or more of "cuttings" every two or three months; and very large ones more than twice that number.

I have, during the season, taken as many as fifty cuttings from one very large old stock plant, and these have grown up into splendid geraniums, all springing from that one single root, and all in bloom a few months after they were cut off from the parent plant.

Each cutting must be prepared separately before it is put into the sand, and this preparation is only the work of a

few seconds. It must be cut square through at the bottom, a little below the lowest leaf; a quarter of an inch from the leaf is sufficient. On some cuttings not longer than the finger half a dozen leaves may have to be taken off, and this must be done very carefully, without cutting into or injuring the green rind of the little stem, for it is too green and full of sap to be called bark. Every leaf must be removed by a clever cut, no dragging or fraying any portion of the stem.

When placed in the sand in a little hole, made with anything small, two of the eyes from which the lowest leaves were cut off must be covered and buried in the sand, one, or sometimes two, of these leaf-eyes will send out the fine white thread-like fibres, which are the root.

It scarcely matters how short these cuttings are, so long as there is an eye or two to plunge into the moist sand, an inch or so of stem, and two or three tiny leaves left at the top; they are sure to grow if managed as described.

My father never went out without bringing home with him bundles of cuttings, and keeping me employed from morning to night in striking them, on my heated flue, and then moving them into the smallest sized flower-pots, which were filled with rich loam and leaf-mould. And my dear mother had her little joke, about my father's pleasant walks through a shady wood, where he had often met her, in the days of her maidenhood, by the well-known stile. As the plants grew larger, they had to be again removed into bigger pots, and if required to be very large, pots were used in which there were only two or three dozen in a "cast;" and these, with the loam and labour, caused the flowers to become rather expensive, though what is called a forty-eight pot is the largest size they are put into for the trade, in a regular way.

There are few prettier sights than a long striking-pit covered with silver sand, and filled with various cuttings, all stuck in in even rows. It is all that can be imagined of a garden in Fairyland, for many of the cuttings are not more than two inches high, and on these many a little bud has been left, which the heat from underneath causes to open, and then you see a geranium, or whatever it is, in full bloom, though the whole plant was often not so tall as your little finger.

Dearly did my sister Jane love to turn her face to my striking-pit and look on what she called a fairy forest, in which the trees were inch-high verbenas, heliotropes, fuschias, calceolarias, and geraniums; and her imaginative mind would picture deer, and birds, and fairies, all in proportion with her diminutive forest, which she would lie looking at with dreamy and half-shut eyes for the hour together.

She was also of great use to me, though she had to lie on her back, and would be wheeled into the greenhouse near to what I called my work-table, as she said it was much warmer than the cottage. Her quick, nimble fingers prepared the cuttings in much less time than I could have done; and as many brought to us from warm greenhouses were in bloom, it was quite a picture to see her lying down on her little cot, half-buried in the leaves and flowers she had snipped off.

She used to call the scarlet geranium flowers her robins, as they fell among the green leaves that covered her like one of the babes in the wood, as she used to say; and often in the warm greenhouse she would drop asleep holding the cutting in her fingers.

Sometimes our doctor would look in and nod to me and go away without waking her, when she had fallen asleep under a green and scarlet coverlet of foliage and flowers.

The interest she took in my success fully occupied her mind, and the assistance she would lend me found her employment whenever she pleased; and this agreeable change, the doctor said, was doing more towards her recovery than all his skill and medicine, for the mere act of moving to pick up and put down the cuttings was a wonderful help in strengthening her back. I have no doubt that the smell of the peat-mould, which had the aroma of a newly-ploughed field, was refreshing to her, for she liked to turn her head aside and watch me "potting" the newly-struck cuttings.

There are few things sweeter than freshly-turned-up earth brought from the far-away country. I cared not to test the loam brought me by any other method than that of smelling it, satisfied that if it had the new hay-like aroma it would grow the choicest flowers. As this was too expensive to be used to any large extent by itself, I mixed it with some of our own garden-mould, especially with one large pile of rotted leaves and weeds that had never been disturbed for years, and powdered in the hand like flour, excepting the little morsels of decayed fibre which the roots of flowers love to cling to and feed upon.

As we had no end of old tubs about, which had been used for washing vegetables, I put up wooden spouts wherever rain-water was to be caught, having heard practical florists say that thousands of flowers are destroyed every year for want of it, and that from no other causes do so many perish, as this deficiency makes them unhealthy, and more liable to be attacked by insects.

As my long flue was square, there was plenty of room on the bricks to hold shallow pans, so taking advantage of every foot of it, I struck hundreds of plants without any more trouble

than placing them in sand, with a little moist bark beneath the pans to moderate the heat. True I had to stoop a good deal to get at the flue, as it run under the stage, which was soon covered with dozens of plants in pots, and so much stooping made my back ache at times, but as my dear mother often said, "my betters had to do the same."

So must all who have the burthen of Labour to bear, or they will never get it to sit easily on their shoulders. It is the unbending and stiff-necked race of men into whom the cords bite the deepest, as they would slacken of their own accord if those bound with them would but bend a little more.

I impressed upon my father the necessity of getting the right names of all the cuttings he brought to me, so that when they flowered none of my customers might have cause to murmur through the plants turning out different from what I had sold them for. In this point my father was very particular, taking strips of bast and slips of paper with him, and were it only a dozen cuttings, tying them together and writing the correct name on the little bundle. This caused me a good deal of work, as in every pan or row of cuttings I struck, I placed with them a wooden label, on which the correct name of each variety was legibly written, and when potted, placed a separate label in every single pot.

I wrote out hundreds of these labels of a night, after they had all gone to bed, and kept them tied up for use in separate bundles; and when I state that I had obtained upwards of a score of varieties of the verbena alone, and many hundreds of cuttings of most of them, some idea may be formed of the immense number of labels I had to make before I could put aside my pots; for if once the plants got mixed unlabelled, there was no telling one from another until they flowered.

I found this plan of keeping the plants true to their names of great advantage to me, as too many people sell bedding-plants for one thing which prove to be another when they bloom, and so disappoint and lose their customers. This I determined from the commencement should not be the case with me, if pains and attention could prevent it.

It is no more trouble to do a thing right, and continue it, than it is to do a thing wrong; and only half as much if that which is done wrong has to be made right afterwards; for that can only be accomplished by doing it over again.

I soon found the readiest way to make my labels was to saw out the thin laths in long lengths, plane them, then cut them the proper sizes, rubbing them with a little size, so that the ink might not run.

As we had for a long time regularly received the catalogues of the principal seedsmen and florists, though we had but been small purchasers, I had only to refer to the names of the flowers to see that I spelt them right.

But the most valuable contributions I received were stocks or old plants which had supplied cuttings for years that were gone, and would do for years that were to come, if carefully kept. Many of these were very choice—as I afterwards found the Christine to be, though reckoned old-fashioned—especially some of the geraniums, which threw out large masses of bloom, and would I knew be highly valued in our neighbourhood on that account, for poor people like large flowers for the pence they pay, just as they do large greens, not caring much about what epicures consider choice quality.

These came in from all quarters, from head and under-gardeners—often the sons of old gardeners who had known my grandfather—and were employed by independent gentlemen,

who only grew flowers to please their own fancy, and would have thought it derogatory to their high position to have made a single pound of the gardens they cultivated at so great a cost, considering it reward enough to carry off a prize now and then at some great flower show.

In such establishments as these it is a common custom, when trimming the plants, to throw whole barrow-loads of cuttings on the weed-heap, and many of these friends regretted that I had not been prepared earlier, when they could have supplied me more readily. But, late as it was, I managed to fill my greenhouse with various plants, for, as before stated, we had several old frames about, and I knew, if it came a very mild spring, I could place a few dozens of the flowers, first potted, under these "cold lights" as they are called, through having no heat under them, for some plants stand better there than if kept in the greenhouse, especially the calceolarias, if they are strong.

Pleasant country walks beyond the Reformatory.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW I EMPLOYED MYSELF UNTIL MY PLANTS WERE READY.

WHEN I found that all the attention my plants required was lighting a fire in the furnace when the weather was cold, and moving those that were large and strong enough to bear the change out of the greenhouse under the cold lights, I thought I might as well try to earn a few shillings somewhere to help us on until my flowers were ready for sale. My father also

found a little to do for the great florist, Mr. Rose, whose kindness to me I have before spoken of, but was not so fully employed but that he could attend to my fire while I was away, and do everything that was needed. So I filled up the intervals of my slack time by working under a gardener who had the management of the grounds of a Reformatory for boys, a few miles out in the suburbs, while my plants got a little forward; for I said to my mother, "My standing and watching them will not help them to grow; and all the attendance they will require for a few weeks, beyond what father sees to, I shall have time enough for night and morning, and be all the happier if I am away and fully employed during the rest of the day."

What my father found to do was in a few gentlemen's gardens, which Mr. Rose contracted for by the year, keeping them in order, and supplying such bedding plants as were required every season. He had long been acquainted with our family, and made my father a kind of overlooker, as he employed many men to complete his large contracts.

As my engagement terminated on both sides by giving a week's notice, it was clearly understood that I had no intention of staying, though I found, after the first week or so, I might have had a constant engagement had I chosen to have accepted it.

My department was to teach a number of boys gardening—a choice of their own, as they might have been taught tailoring, shoemaking, and several other trades which were carried on in the Reformatory, if they had so chosen.

They were regular street boys, some of them, so to speak, "born thieves," others committed for some petty larceny and partly supported by the small contributions of their parents, who "could do nothing with them at home."

Though they were "a rough lot," I managed, through exercising my patience and controlling my temper, to get on capitally among them, and this no doubt caused a regular engagement to be offered me.

The boys tried me very sorely for the first few days, but when they found I never lost my temper, nor reported them, as I threatened to do if they did not be more attentive and behave better—yet never fulfilled my threat—they said, "I was a good sort, and no gammon," and I was soon able to do anything I pleased with them, for I began in the first instance by selecting them myself, for the head gardener had long known my father.

"I have got several biggish boys out in the grounds, George," he said, "who require a good deal of looking after, and would, I fear, be beyond your management, as you are so young. There are also a score more little rascals in-doors, who all want to be gardeners; will you pick out ten yourself, and try what you can do with them?"

I said I should prefer "breaking them in myself," and went inside to see them. The whole twenty were called into a separate room and placed in a row before me, and I was rather glad that the teacher who came in with them left us to ourselves. The head gardener spoke a few kind words to them; then I was free to choose.

The first one I selected was an impudent-looking little rascal, who was "taking a sight" at me, with the end of his thumb to his nose, and his four little fingers expanded; but there was such an expression of good-humour in his roguish face that I picked him out at once, while he blushed as if ashamed at what he had done.

The second was a sturdy, determined-looking little fellow, who was taken red-handed with the lump of bacon he had

'Was a gipsy-boy and had lived in tents.' Chap. 7, p. 56.

snatched from off the open window-shelf where it was exposed as if to tempt him, and who offered no other defence than that "he was hungry, and thought it would be jolly to have a frizzle, as he had got some 'toke'." His father was transported for felony. I picked him out because he looked me full in the eye, and a smile lighted up his firm, square face as I placed him beside his companion. The third I picked out was a gipsy-boy, and had lived in tents. He was a swarthy little scoundrel, and the expression of his dark eyes was like that of a rat's. So I went on completing my number, partly from the impression made upon me by their looks, and partly from what the head gardener told me of their precedents and behaviour while they had been in the Reformatory. I had arranged beforehand where they were to commence, and had marked out the ground, for there were full two acres in all under spade-cultivation. Spades were given to them suitable to their age and strength, and they were delighted when they got out into the open air.

One or two laughed in my face when asked if they knew how to dig.

"Oh, don't Harry and me know how to dig!" said one, pointing to his companion; "I should think we did, a little bit, rather; such a many times as we've digged and weeded Old Ike's garden."

I asked who Old Ike was.

"Ain't you jolly green," said Harry, "not to know Old Ike, as keeps the marine store in Lock's Fields. But he's 'doing time' in the Penitentiary, 'cause he bought a lot of gas-piping that we had 'nobbled.' All the boys what lived 'on the cross,' knowed Old Ike, and digged in his garden. He bought any*thing*, he did."

'Was a gipsy-boy and had lived in tents.' Chap. 7, p. 56.

I pointed to the end of a wide bed intended for potatoes, and told four of them to begin. Four others I set to hand-weeding a gravel-walk, and the other two to dig a small bed that required no care. The four who had said they knew how to dig, did not frame at all amiss, but when I told them the ground must be dug two-spade deep, they did not understand me. "Fetch a couple of barrows," I said, "and I'll show you how to dig 'two-spit deep.'"

The barrows were brought and soon filled, then wheeled away and emptied at the other end of the bed, and the work continued until there was a hole deep enough to bury the whole four in.

"Now, what's your next little game?" said Harry. "We never digged like that at Old Ike's, only when we wanted to hide something we'd smugged."

"I'll soon show you," I said, taking up my own large spade: and digging a portion of the ground a spade deep, I threw it at the bottom of the hole they had made. I then went lower down into the same ground, and digging it a second spade deep, threw it on the top of the other, and said, "That is digging 'two-spit deep.'"

"Oh crikee! we shall have a deep hole all the way along," said one of the boys, "if we keeps on at that 'ere game, a digging up one lot, and then going deeper to fetch out another lot to bury that first chap."

"That's just what I wish you to do," I said. "The earth you throw at the top is fresh, and had nothing grown in it last year; that which you bury first grew a crop of winter greens, and hasn't much nourishment in it, so you see you are making new ground, and will do all the way along until you come to the end of the bed, when there will be a deep hole left. And

now do you see why I got you to wheel those barrow-loads of earth to the other end of the bed?"

"To fill up the hole," they all exclaimed at once, though not in the same words. I then changed the boys, and set them to weeding, making others dig, and so by dinner-time they all understood how to dig the ground two-spade deep, and form a new bed on the top of the old one, burying with the latter all the weeds in the bottom trench.

That was a merry morning for the boys when, in another bed which had been richly manured the previous year, I sowed the first crop of carrot-seed, for I had promised them when it was sown they should all join me in the "gardeners' dance." That would be jolly, they all said, and two or three gentlemen of the Reformatory committee came up just as I had arranged all the boys in a row, with myself in the middle, at one end of the bed. I saw that they were all in a line, so close as to touch one another, with the feet close together, both the inner sides of their shoes touching. I had given them their lesson before I placed them on the bed. "Now then!" I exclaimed, "one, two, three, and off we go!" and as I again repeated the last number, off we all went to the tune of "Ri-tum-tiddy-iddy-ri-tum-te," Harry, the cleverest of all the boys, leading the chorus, and caring no more for the presence of the visitors than he did for the sparrows.

It was hard work keeping the feet close together, and not moving one foot more than an inch or two at a time beyond the other, and so any boy will find it if he does the "gardeners' dance" down a freshly-dug bed, a hundred feet long, without stopping, keeping his hands clasped together behind his back all the time—hard work, though we seemed so merry over it.

The visitors laughed heartily, and when we had done and I explained to the gentlemen that it was the proper and best way to trample in seeds that had to take a firm hold of the ground, and that the ridges left between our feet made a nice light covering when raked over the seeds we had trod in, they were so pleased with my explanation, and the way in which we had finished our work, that they ordered three quarts of our best table-beer and some bread and cheese to be sent to us, so that each boy had half-a-pint, and I had the remainder, and we made so good a luncheon, that not one of my little workmen on that day wondered how long it would be before the dinner-bell rung.

I became such a favourite with the boys, through obtaining permission for them to go out with me, and enjoy many a pleasant country walk beyond the Reformatory, and got them so forward, that when I wanted to leave and look after my plants, I was called before the committee and requested to spare a day whenever I possibly could, if it was but once or twice a week, and that my wages should be increased, nor would they be at all particular about my time, to an hour or two, as none of the boys they had made gardeners of had so improved, or made such progress every way, as those they had placed under me. I thanked the gentlemen for their kindness, and promised that I would fulfil their wishes so far as lay in my power, but that shortly, growing flowers would fill up all my time, though even then I would, with their permission, run over for an hour or so once a week, just to see how the boys were getting on, though for such flying visits I should make no charge.

I not only did my duty by the boys, but by kind words and great patience, I instilled into their minds much of my own

experience, showing and proving to them how much better some seeds would grow through only having the mould riddled over them lightly, instead of being trampled hard down; how to take up and again "prick out" such things as lettuces, celery, and several others, three or four inches apart, when they were scarcely as many inches high, and how, so divided, they had room to grow, instead of crowding close to one another in the seed-beds, and would become strong young plants in place of poor weakly things, when set out finally a foot apart in the beds or in the deep celery trenches.

All I had been taught by my father I instructed them in, and in such a way as made the boys feel I was their friend, and had their interests at heart; and I am sure they were all grieved when they found I could not remain with them altogether, and said, in their rough, honest way, "I was a good 'un, I was, and they shouldn't like nobody else like me." I was of service to some of them on a future day, as will be shown, and that was a great comfort to me.

During that "dead" time, before my plants were ready, the few shillings I brought home from the Reformatory were of great use to my dear mother, as I well knew, though she never alluded to running short, which, but for that and what my father was paid by Mr. Rose, she must have done, considering the many little pulls I had made at her purse, for one thing and another, since I first commenced running up my green-house.

Nor was it the money alone I was paid that did me such service. I made friends of many of the gentlemen connected with the establishment, who in after days came with their wives and daughters to look at and purchase my flowers, and who used to make merry by asking me how I did the "gardeners' dance" in the greenhouse, among my plants.

Mr. Rose, the great florist, with whose pretty daughter I had breakfasted in his great garden when a little boy, also came to look in and see how they were getting on—so my father told me, for, unfortunately, I had been out whenever he called. My mother had also seen him, and in her hearing he had said, "Nothing can be finer than his bedding-plants, of their size, and if it comes a fine spring, and he gets them under his cold lights to harden a bit, he'll do well with them. But tell him from me, that he must now devote the whole of his time to them, and that there are dozens in 'thumbs' too big for that size, that want repotting at once."

I instantly followed his advice, just in time, for I found that scores of my finest little plants were "pot-bound," that is, the roots had become too large for the pots, and all the fibres were entangled, and pressed tight and close against the sides, displaying a close, hard coating of tight-fitting fibres when taken out of the pots in which they had no longer room enough to grow.

As I wanted a little more loam to fill up my larger pots when I shifted my plants, and had not money without keeping back a portion of the wages I received from the Reformatory, and as I neither liked to do that, nor make an inroad on the little dear mother had by her to carry on with, I took my donkey and cart to where I had been at work, and brought home a load large enough to answer my purpose, and which would have cost me from twelve to sixteen shillings had I ordered a regular cart-load from Wimbledon Common, for the committee had kindly told me that I was welcome to anything I could make use of in growing my plants.

As there were a good many trees about the place, I at once

availed myself of their kind offer, and said I should be very thankful if they would let the boys gather the fallen leaves into a heap, as there was nothing more beneficial to the growth of flowers than well-rotted leaf-mould; which they said should be done.

This leaf-mould was of great use to me for many a long day after I quitted the Reformatory, leaving so good a name behind me that there was not a boy in the establishment but what was glad to sweep up the fallen foliage and add it to the pile.

I knew that as soon as my plants were ready, and the time came for "bedding-out," money must come tumbling in, for, fine as they were, I was sure I should have no difficulty in finding purchasers for them; but until that time arrived, I was determined not to spend a single halfpenny unless it was absolutely necessary, for though my dear mother never even hinted at her money running short, I could see, from many of her half-concealed devices, that she was narrowing her expenditure to the smallest possible compass that she could, without attracting too much attention.

There was hope, but how near or how remote the fulfilment of it might be, we could not tell, and that was the compensation to be made to my father for the loss of his garden, by the railway company.

The directors had sent for him, had received him very kindly, and expressed themselves perfectly satisfied in every way, though they regretted that his average return had been so little throughout the last seven years, for he placed his account-book in their hands, which I had kept during the last four years, and which was correct to the receipt of a single shilling.

They complimented him on his straightforward, honest statement, and bade him tell me that they should recommend my flowers, and be able in a little time to throw something in my way, when the stations along the line were completed, as they intended ornamenting the ground around them with flowers. There was therefore a bright gleam of hope in the distance, but how soon it might draw near and break over us, there was no telling.

Though I knew him well, and had often been to his house for flowers our customers had ordered to be got, and on which he allowed us a fair profit, I did not like calling on Mr. Rose, for fear he might think I took too great a liberty; so, as he had promised to call again soon, I hoped I might be at home, and hear what he had to say, for I well knew if my "bedding-out plants" suited him, he could, were he so minded, take every flower I had grown, and then not have a tenth part of what he would require to complete his large contracts.

My sister Jane told me she was sure he took a great interest in my success, as he said, "if he had known soon enough I was going to turn florist, he would have sent me some of his old 'stock-plants' to have got cuttings off, as he had not used his striking-pit for two or three years, and had pulled down one of his greenhouses to make room for his tulip-frames." My sister further said, "I feel quite sure he intends taking a good many of your plants, because he said he hoped you would not dispose of any large quantity until he had seen you, which would be in a few days."

I hoped it would be very soon, as I was getting short of fuel, and to make my coke and coal spin out was heating my flue with any old posts or rails I could pick up out of the worst portions of our garden-palings, which had been taken down to

make room for the railway, and stacked up in one corner of our rood of ground, to be used again in case of need.

Then the weather changed suddenly, and I had no need to light a fire in my greenhouse, and I felt certain that if it continued, things might be placed out, and no fear of their receiving a check. The street-hawkers, or costermongers, began to look in again, and said they "should have a deal with me" when my plants were in flower and got a good size, for their class of customers liked to have plenty for their money, and nothing could be too big for them in the way of flowers.

I was now compelled to give up attending to the Reformatory, for my little flower-harvest was ready to be gathered.

Gathering flowers that were twined about the trellis-work above her head.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY FIRST PLANTS BRING IN MONEY JUST IN TIME FOR US.

It was an unusually mild and forward spring; so much so, that in the few square yards of ground which my mother always called her flower-garden, many of the common hardy plants which stood year after year, such as gilly-flowers, crocuses, hyacinths, and primroses, were in flower at the end of March,

while the gladioli, lupins, and others, had shot up as high as they generally grew by the middle of April. Such a mild, warm, forward season had not been known for years, and helped to put several pounds in my pocket, which I never could have possessed had the season been severe.

All the old frames that we had formerly used were dragged out and filled with plants, and it had been sharp work to strike the cuttings, pot them, and get them strong enough to be removed from the greenhouse, and placed under these old frames, in ten or twelve weeks, and to keep up the supply until I had as many plants out-of-doors, under these "cold lights," as would have nearly filled my little greenhouse, while that also was as full as it could hold.

My plants were healthier through this removal, as it hardened them; and I knew that they could be sold safely for bedding-out, and also be depended upon much better than if they had been left to stand in the heat of the house, as too sudden a removal might have chilled them, whereas—though without heat—they were still under glass, and faced the sunny South. They were splendid.

I was greatly pleased one busy day at the end of April, with the few kind words father addressed to me, all the more because they showed that what I had hitherto done had met with his approval. I was working hard at carrying baskets of plants in pots out of the greenhouse for my father to place under the frames, many of which we had emptied—as the weather was as warm as summer—to run the risk of their standing, by placing them out in the open air uncovered.

I had emptied my two baskets of pots, and was returning for more, when my father, rising from the frame over which he was stooping, straightened his back, and said, "I am very glad,

George, Mr. Rose and you keep me so fully employed; only six months ago my greatest trouble was the thought that, when spring came, the time we were always so busy, preparing for our crops, and getting in a few of our earliest things, I should then have nothing to do, unless I got a situation; nothing but to go mooning and moping about, like an ill-sitting hen that has lost all her chickens. But instead of that, I am as busy as Throp's wife, who, they say, used to do all her spinning after she went to bed. And another thing I must tell thee, my lad, many old flower-growers, who have seen thy plants, say that they never in all their lives saw finer or more healthier grown in so short a time: and that thou wilt soon be able to make a good deal more off the rood of ground than ever I made off the whole acre, even in my best of days. May God prosper thee!" He took off his hat as he uttered the last four words, then resumed his stooping position, and continued to arrange the pots in rows within the open frame.

I said something, though I scarcely know what, such a glow of delight pervaded me; for I knew that my father's praise was no empty compliment, but sincerely given, because he believed it to be merited, and never given unless he did, though he did not know what rare plants I had grown.

My mother was standing and looking at us from the window at the time, and seeing I noticed her, she beckoned me in by waving her hand instead of tapping at the glass, as was her usual custom when she wanted me. I knew from this silent signal that she had something to communicate she did not wish to be known to my father. I was right.

I understood all my mother's little ways, and, from the manner she kept unconsciously twitching at her apron-strings, was quite sure that she had something to say, which she would

rather not have said, if she could have helped it; and, as when I got in I perceived that she hesitated, I said at once, "What is it, dear mother? Come, out with it at once: you know there are to be no secrets between us."

I saw from the way my sister Jane looked at us both, that she was well aware what was coming, for there was something of an anxious expression on her dear face; and as my mother still hesitated, Jane, to use an old adage, "let the cat out of the bag" at once, by saying, "Mother's only got two pounds left, George, and the man has called for the taxes, and she sent him away without paying him, as she did not know how long it might be before you would have any money coming in for your plants."

"That's just it," said my mother, "and I've had it on my lips for several days, but was afraid it might dishearten you a little if I named it to you. And yet, God knows, George, we are all getting to look up to you now, somehow, and even father calls you our chief prop."

"Mother, I am quite prepared for you," I said; and no sooner had the words passed my lips than a smile illuminated both of those dear faces, and no one knows how I felt rewarded for all I had done when I saw sunshine where a moment before all was shade. It was the same smile that I used to see on my dear mother's face, when we sat down to our humble meals, during the busiest season, when the crops had turned out well. It had faded out in the autumn, when we were all so anxious, and my father so uneasy, but had returned during the progress I made with my greenhouse, and while I brought home my few shillings weekly from the Reformatory. Nor had I noticed, until she called me in, the thoughtful expression of her countenance, so busy had

I been among my plants, many of which were now ready for the market.

"I knew well you must be getting short of money," I continued; "so many draws as I have had of you for coke, and loam, and silver-sand, and tobacco-rag to destroy the fly; but the taxes had not entered into my calculation. Give me the paper, and I will call and pay them to-morrow. I have already got some hundred dozens of bedding-plants ready for sale, and shall be sure to find a customer."

"I told you so, mother," said Jane, with a look of triumph. "I was sure he would be prepared for you, and I am so glad you never named it to father; and I told you you needn't worry yourself so, for George had had his thinking-cap on a long time, and had considered everything."

My mother's only reply to me was a kiss, and though I cannot tell why, I know I blushed as I returned it, when I saw the smile on her dear face, while the tears were standing in her eyes; and I thought when I got outside, how familiar Shakspeare must have been with all human feelings, for he somewhere speaks of our "weeping at what we are glad of," and his were the only works I could take up time after time and never get wearied of, the Holy Bible excepted.

Mr. Rose, as I before stated, one of the largest florists and seed-merchants in our neighbourhood, had been to look at my plants, and expressed his approval of them. He said he was in a hurry, when he last called, but if I would look in upon him in the course of a week or so, any morning before eleven, he had no doubt we should strike a bargain, and that he generally used many hundreds of dozens of bedding-plants, as he supplied a many gentlemen about the Clapham, Stockwell, and Brixton

roads, who had large gardens, but did not keep regular gardeners, nor raise their own plants.

I had heard a whisper that the gardener who had supplied this gentleman for years, had been going wrong for some time, neglecting his business, and frequenting a public-house parlour, which he often left too late at night to rise as early as he ought, to have done justice to his plants, which ought all to be watered long before eleven o'clock during the season, and which is a long job where there are some hundreds of them to water. Also that he had drawn money on account of plants he had not had in readiness to deliver, at the time agreed upon when the advance was made; in short, that the great florist had long been weary of him, and on the look-out for some one on whom he could depend, who lived handy; so, as my father's garden was pretty near, he came, as he said, "to give us a turn," as we had had dealings for seeds with his family for threescore years or more, off and on.

When he first called, he said to me, good-humouredly, "I suppose this experiment has eaten pretty deep into your capital, George, hasn't it?" I replied that it had; and he said, further, "Well, if we can agree about the price when you call, you can have a cheque, for I know you come of a honest family, and that I can depend upon you. But remember, I must have them cheap; so good morning, and I wish you every success." And that was nearly all he said: but such was my faith in him, that when I said, "Mother, I am quite prepared for you," I uttered the words with as much confidence as if I had had the money jingling in my pocket.

Another thing I well knew, which was, that with his first-class connection, if he had not thought my plants were all that could be desired, he would not have had them at any price,

however much he might feel disposed to serve me; for though he was said to be pretty free as regarded money, when once a bargain was made, and not too particular about everything being delivered when he thought cash was needed, yet for all that, the difficulty was in striking a bargain with him at all, as he was said to be in the trade, "a very hard nail."

As it was my first venture in my new line of business, and as I well knew, would be, if we could come to terms, one of the largest orders I was likely to obtain of a single customer, I smartened myself up a bit, for I felt that, although so young, I was going as a master-florist to endeavour to deal with another master in the same line; the only difference between us being that he had made a fortune, and that I had mine to make.

I wondered as I entered the doorway whether I should ever have such a greenhouse as the one I then saw, fronting the road, filled with the rarest flowers, and forming in the framed glass window one of the prettiest spring pictures I had ever looked upon. I was going through into the garden to see if any of the men were about, as I did not know whether I should do right or not by knocking at the house-door as I came on business, when a young girl, laying down her basket, came to me, by going round and in through some door, into what seemed to be a kind of counting-house, which was glazed, with an inner light, and looked into the greenhouse, commanding a view of all those beautiful flowers I had so greatly admired while looking at them from the street.

It was a beautiful picture, that pretty maiden gathering flowers that were twined about the trellis-work above her head.

When I told her my name, and asked to see Mr. Rose, she looked at me very kindly, and smiled as she said "Yes; I know, my father was speaking about you; I will call him."

It was the same maiden I had breakfasted with when a little boy, in her father's garden.

She opened a door, the upper part of which was glazed, and communicated with the house, and in a few seconds her father appeared, and said, "Come in, George; we are just going to have a mouthful of bread and cheese, and a glass of our home-brewed ale is a fine thing for growing lads; your father often praises it."

He then turned to his daughter and asked her if she had made those accounts out: run his business eye over the addresses of the envelopes in which she had enclosed them, and we went in together to lunch.

Mrs. Rose had known my dear mother ever since they were girls, and though they had not seen each other very often of late years, there was still a quiet friendship between them, and I was rather astonished to find that she had called with her husband the day he came to look at my plants, for neither my mother nor my sister had mentioned her visit, and she had entered and left the cottage without my seeing her. She said, "Your mother and I had a long gossip about you the other day, George, and she told me all about what you were doing; and I hope, from the bottom of my heart, you'll succeed. Mary says she'll sell all the plants she can for you; and my husband says they are very fine."

"That I will," said the daughter, helping me to a young lettuce; "and you will, too, won't you, father?"

"Yes; we'll see what can be done for him," said the great florist, rubbing his hand over his stubbly chin, which sounded like working a fine rasp.

I noticed that Mary neither tasted the strong ale nor the rich old Cheshire cheese, but only a morsel of rhubarb-tart—

the crust of which I could have blown away—and a glass of water for her luncheon; and when she left the table her mother told me that she had been educated to keep her father's accounts.

"Yes. I thought it was the best thing I could do for her," said Mr. Rose. "No Frenching nor no Italianing, I said to the schoolmistress, when I took her to Clapham. A bit of drawing, if you like, for then she can paint a flower; and a little bit of pianoing, for she has a good voice, and I should like her to play and sing, which she can do very prettily; but book-keeping and good writing is what I want before anything. And that I got for my money, for I spared no expense."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket-book—it was an order she had taken that morning for flowers, which he was about to send one of his men to deliver—and I saw that the writing was almost as beautiful as copper-plate engraving.

"All money received and paid," he said, "passes through Mary's hands, and nobody else's, except mine and mother's. I did keep a clerk; but he wasn't the thing, nor near it, so I let him go. I let him off." And he waved his hand, as if dismissing him.

"We don't know how much money he had taken, at one time and another," said Mrs. Rose; "but it was very unpleasant to send people's bills in, then be shown his receipt. But so it was in no end of cases, where he had received the money and never accounted for it. But, as my husband says, we let him go; for imprisoning him wouldn't bring a shilling of it back. Everybody knew about it; and he's never been able to get another situation since, but is scamping about somewhere. We had long known his parents, poor things! I felt more sorry for them than I did for the loss of our money.

When a person once begins to be dishonest, George, they never know what it will end in. I've heard sad accounts of him."

"Never mind, old woman, we've got over that," said her husband; "and now touch the bell, and let Betty draw us another jug of ale, for George and I have got a little business to talk over, and you've got your dinner to order, and such like, I dare say."

"That's a pretty plain hint for me to be off, George," she said, good-naturedly; "he never likes either me or Mary to be with him when he's driving a bargain, as he calls it. But I hope he'll make this one pretty easy to you."

When the servant had filled the ale-jug, and his wife had left the room, he said, "There never ought to be any favour shown on either side in matters of business, for it is not business if there is; friendship is one thing, and business is another; and I never, if I can help it, have dealings with a man a second time, if he begins to preach about how much he has favoured me in the bargain I made with him. I don't ask him for any favour. I ask his price, and if it suits me, I pay it, after a little bargaining. If we don't agree, there's no harm done—he has his goods to take to another market, and I have my money to do the same with. You see that?"

I confessed I did. But I could not see clearly what he was aiming at, though I had no doubt at all in my own mind that it was to get my plants as cheap as he could. Another thing I noticed—when he began to talk about business, the whole expression of his countenance altered: the pleasant smile he had received me with vanished, and in its place there was a kind of calculating hardness, for I know not how else to describe it.

"I'm a man of few words, when it comes to a matter of business," he said, taking up the written order for the flowers

his daughter had made out. "What's to be the lowest figure a dozen for 'thumbs,' for bedding-out? Ready money, remember."

"I hope you won't think three-and-sixpence too much," I said, without hesitation, quite sure that I shouldn't get it, and knowing what "a hard nail" he was, and that he would have wanted them for less, if even I had offered them for what I intended to take, which was three shillings.

"That's more than I shall give," he said; "three shillings is my price, and no more. I have bought 'thumbs' to bed-out at half-a-crown. I shall want a few 'sixties,' and am willing to pay three-and-six for them. Is it a bargain? I've a good many things to attend to. If it is, take a cheque to Mary, and she'll fill it up. I'll take one hundred dozen: that will be fifteen pounds, and I won't take any discount."

It was quite as much as I ever expected to get for so large a quantity, so the bargain was closed, and he took out his cheque-book from a drawer, signed his name, "Robert Rose," in a great, black, hard hand, with the figures at the bottom, in the following careful form, so that they could not readily be altered, "£15—0—0," then told me to take it to his daughter to fill it up, bade me "good morning," and was gone, with the written list his daughter had made out in his hand, and without even naming a word as to when the plants were to be delivered.

I went into the little counting-house, where the maiden sat at her writing-table, with her face to the flowers, that showed so beautifully through the glass, and there was a pleasant light in her eyes, and a sincerity in her smile, as she took the cheque, and said, "Oh, I am so glad you sold father the plants, you don't know." The words were simple and earnest, and I felt them.

"Look in often," she said, as she gave me the cheque she had filled up, and I handed her the stamped receipt. "There's

always something wanted; and we have had such a deal of trouble to get our plants for this last year or two, which I am sure we shall not have with you. And ma' sends her love to your mother and sister, and we are both coming to see them very soon." She held out her hand, and I shook it, then went my way, thinking how good and kind she was to me, and what a treasure she must be to her parents.

I went to the Borough Bank, got the cheque cashed in gold, called and paid the rates, brought home a couple of tea-cakes, from a celebrated shop, knowing how much my mother and sister liked them; and, placing them, with the receipt for the taxes and thirteen sovereigns, on the table, said, "There, dear mother, is the sweetest money I ever earnt in my life, and the first I have received for my flowers."

There were tears of joy in her eyes. My sister kissed me, and my father said, "It would have taken a good many loads of vegetables, George, to have brought in all that gold."

An old Garden of the period of Charles the First.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW I PAID MY POTTER BY SELLING MY "CHRISTINES."

GOOD a customer as the great florist might prove to be, and grateful as I was for his kindness, especially for not taking off five per cent. from the fifteen pounds, which his daughter told me "showed that her father looked on me with favour," still I knew that I must become a competitor in the open market among others, to get a connection that would pay. I owed seven pounds ten shillings for pots, which, taking the average at fifty in a cast—which would be a fair calculation, as I used so many "thumbs"—the smallest of all pots—and a few

"forty-eights," shows that I had put plants into some hundreds of dozens, and as the pots but stood me in two shillings a "cast," I had several hundreds for a sovereign.

Vast as the number was, I was able to obtain so many "cuttings" from the plants I had myself struck and got into a forward state, that I already wanted more pots, especially as a geranium called "Christine," that had only been out a year, had to be moved again out of the "sixties" into the "forty-eight" pots, and would then fetch a long price, as the flowers were of that rich deep pink which is such a favourite colour with the ladies, and they were the finest plants I had out under the cold lights.

I was well aware that very few nurserymen had the Christine, as I had obtained the cuttings in a very peculiar way, from a rather indolent lady's gardener, under a promise that he was to have a dozen of the finest plants as soon as they began to show for bloom, which they were already doing; and two or three I had put into a warm corner, and attended to a little more carefully, were in flower in "forty-eights," and splendid plants they were.

I knew I could have the money out of what I had given my mother to pay my pot-bill, but she seemed so pleased when I gave it her, and said how long she should be able to carry on her housekeeping before she wanted more, that I resolved I would not touch a single sovereign out of whatever I might hand over to her during the season, unless I saw a way of speedily turning it into two.

She had named the pot-money when I gave her the sovereigns, and I told her I was all right, and should try my Christines in a day or two, of which I had about sixty dozen, allowing for what I should require for the autumn cuttings and

Gardener to a Lady." Chap. 9, p. 79.

a few over, besides the dozen I had to deliver to the man who was gardener to a lady at the old Manor House, and whose son—an old schoolfellow—had got the cuttings for me, and used to visit me while working at the Reformatory.

I don't know what we were going to have for dinner that day, but no doubt it was something very nice; for when my mother went to the far end of our bit of ground, where we had left a few roots of rhubarb standing, and got a little spinach my father had sown, then ready for cutting, she stood watching me potting my plants, while my father was watering, holding what vegetables she had gathered in her apron, and said, "I shan't allow you any lunch this morning, for fear of spoiling your dinner, though you may come in and have your eleven o'clock beer."

"No lunch, mother, after all the gold George gave you the other day!" said my father, good-humouredly; "why you are like all the rest of the misers, that grow more covetous as they become richer. Shall we get up a revolution, George, and storm the safe? I spied a splendid bit of old Cheshire in it this morning."

"I must have a mouthful of something, mother, before I go over the water," I said, pointing to the two splendid Christine geraniums that stood near me; "for I am going to try my luck with those this morning, and you know I shall be too late to do any business if I stay dinner."

"I am so sorry," said my mother, looking rather grave; "for I had made up my mind, as it was out of the first money you had got for your flowers, I would treat you and father to a nice dinner. It was partly Jane's proposal, and we shall be so disappointed."

My father looked at me, and though he did not speak, there

was a silent pleading in the expression of his eye, which said, as plain as if in words, "Don't disappoint her."

"We'll have the good dinner, dear mother," I said, "and many thanks for your indulgence. The plants will do just as well to-morrow, and I don't know whether it is not of more consequence to finish re-potting these Christines, as they are so forward, than losing two or three hours in going over to Covent Garden Market. They will keep, I know; and I shall be run after for them when they are once seen." And my mother went in quite delighted, for she knew no greater pleasure than that of pleasing us.

Some may think it superstitious, but I believe otherwise; for duty and obedience as assuredly bring their own reward here, as virtue and religion do hereafter. Had I not yielded to my mother's wishes, by joining them at the dinner she had been at such pains to prepare, and on account of it deferred my visit to the florist in Covent Garden until another day, that which was would not have been.

On the following day, my dear mother put me up, between two thick slices of bread, part of the fillet of roast mutton left out of our—to us—extravagant dinner for a week-day, the previous day, to which I was to get a pint of beer at the market-house where we were so well known, and with this packed in my pocket, and one of my gorgeous Christines under each arm, I made my way over Waterloo Bridge in as beautiful a May morning as ever threw a primrose colour over the sky. The granite of the bridge glittered again in the sunshine, until it almost dazzled me as much as the colours of my geraniums did the passers-by, many of whom exclaimed, "What lovely flowers!"

I had crossed the bridge, and was going through the large

gate instead of the turnstile, for fear of injuring my geraniums in so narrow a passage, when who should there be pulling up at the gate in his gig, paying his toll, but the great florist, Mr. Rose.

He neither said "How do?" nor "Good morning, George," but began with, "Why, wherever did you get those Christines, George? I've been driving about all the morning, looking for some, and have not been able to find more than a few stock plants anywhere."

"Must either drive on or draw back, sir," said the tollman. "Can't have you stop here blocking the way."

"Grew them, to be sure," I answered, "and am going to show them to Mr. Smith." So I was, though I knew there was great rivalry between him and Mr. Rose; but that was not my business.

"Grew them, did you?" he said. "Why, you never told me you had got any Christine cuttings. But jump in; I want to have a little talk with you. Be careful of the plants—that will do; they'll ride there nicely, without ever once shaking off a petal. Why didn't you tell me you had got these Christines?" he again asked, as we rattled back over the bridge.

"Because you only asked to see bedding-plants," I replied, "and these were in 'sixties' at the time, and I knew you would not like to pay me my price for them. They are in 'forty-eights' now, as you see, and I want a long figure for them."

"In 'forty-eights,' are they?" he said, his face shaping itself into that old hard expression, which I well knew denoted that he was making up his mind as to how much he intended offering per dozen. "How many have you?"

"Fifty dozen," I answered, "to sell; for if there be so few about, as you say, I must keep back a dozen or two for cuttings."

"Quite right; it's a sweet pretty thing," he said; "and don't you part with a single stock plant. It will have a great run for a year or two, if it isn't made too common. You haven't had your dinner, have you?"

I told him I had got my dinner in my pocket, and intended having it after I had done my business in the market, if I hadn't met with him.

"Then you can save it for your supper, and shall go home and have dinner with me, if you will," he said. "Polly will be glad to see you, and so will my old woman; and we'll have a jug of ale after, and strike a bargain for all your Christines." Then he gave a merry chuckle, as he added, "But you mustn't be too hard on me, George, because I was foolish enough to blab about its being so scarce. I made a slip there, my lad."

"I should have found it out before this time," I said, "if I hadn't had the pleasure of meeting with you. But I would sooner you had them than anybody I know; and what's more, since you have let the secret out unawares, to show you I will not take the least advantage, you shall fix your own price."

He turned his head sharp, and looked at me. It was not his hard, bargain-making look, but a pleased expression, which he could not help showing, because I declined taking advantage of his inadvertence, and he said, without hesitating a moment, "I will give you six shillings a dozen for every plant, George."

"They are yours," I said; "and I will not sell a single plant to the trade."

It was a shilling a dozen more than I should even have asked on the preceding day, and wanting the money as I did for the potter, I should not then have refused four-and-sixpence. So, by obliging and obeying my mother in putting off

what I intended doing, to please her, I was a gainer of at least two pounds ten, if not three pounds fifteen, for I should not have turned away an offer of four-and-sixpence.

It is wonderful how we get on with a man who is pleased with us; and I feel confident that through leaving the great florist to put his own price on the plants, after he had told me how difficult they were to obtain, I rose immensely in his estimation; for it showed that I had implicit faith in him, and did not adhere too strictly to the letter of the hard lesson he had read to me about there being no friendship in business. That summer, Christines were so scarce, that single plants readily fetched a crown in Covent Garden market.

I dined with him, and among the many hard tasks I ever had to do, I scarcely remember one more difficult to accomplish than I found, that day, in clearing my plate of the great slices of corned silver-side of beef he helped me to—rather too plentifully. I could neither touch the rice-pudding nor the cheese, and had it not been for the presence of his wife and daughter at the table, I should have unloosed a button or two of my waistcoat. Whenever he came to a part of the great joint which had taken the salt just to his taste, a portion was added to my piled-up plate, with a "Try this bit, George; it has caught just the right flavour; it's beautiful, my lad." I looked imploringly at Mrs. Rose at last, and then at my plate, and the worthy dame understood me in a moment, and said; "Do let him finish what he's got on his plate, before you give him any more, unless you intend killing him with kindness."

"As father used to tell me I did my flowers when I was a little girl," said the daughter, kindly coming to the rescue, "by giving them too much water."

I think during his rounds that morning, Mr. Rose must have

had more than one glass of ale with the different florists and nurserymen he had called upon while hunting after the scarce geranium I was fortunate enough to supply him with so unexpectedly; for he did nothing but talk about where he had been, and who he had seen when he drove round by Chelsea, Knightsbridge, Brompton, and Kensington, without anywhere finding what he wanted; he also gave us a description of an old garden of the period of Charles the First, he had called at, always ending with, "It was the toss up of a halfpenny when I drove down the Haymarket whether I should come home over Westminster Bridge or not: if I had done so, I should have missed George with the very things in his hand I was looking for, and he would have gone into the market, and Smith would have snapped up every plant the lad had got, and a pretty price he would have made me pay for what I wanted, though I shall serve him the same when he comes to me—which he must do now.

"Mother, I'm as pleased as Punch," he continued, slapping his wife on the back, after the servant had cleared the table, "to think I should have come over Waterloo Bridge and met George as I did, and bought all his Christines while we were driving home; and you must make me a glass of grog, and Polly will fill my pipe, and George must have a drop more ale to keep me company—or a glass of wine, if he would like it better. Give me my cheque-book, my pet; when I've scrawled my name, thou can fill it up for fifteen pounds, and that will be my last job of work for to-day. I'm as pleased as Punch with my day's work!" and he looked the picture of happiness, as he sat in his great easy-chair, pipe in mouth, and his hot glass of grog steaming up at his elbow.

He insisted upon his wife and daughter joining us, and making

"a bit of a holiday, for once and away," as he called it; and when the servant set out the wine-decanters, and quite a little feast of grapes, almonds, raisins, nuts, cakes, and biscuits, I thought of the cold meat and bread in my pocket, which I should have been eating in the market-house, with my pint of porter, but for meeting Mr. Rose by chance, and all the time perhaps, full of anxiety about the bill I owed for pots.

All this was owing to my having yielded to the wishes of my mother—to partaking of a pleasure she had prepared for me, and which my success would repay her threefold.

During that pleasant afternoon I picked up a great deal of information from Mr. Rose, respecting the best manures for potting, and the advantage to be obtained from striking on slate in moist sand, with a moderate heat, and soon found that, to become a first-rate florist, I must have a boiler and iron pipes, and heat my greenhouses and cutting-pit with hot water.

I knew I had had everything in my favour, that such a warm, forward spring had scarcely ever been known within the memory of man; and that, had it turned out a cold backward season, I must have lost scores of dozens of plants, which, for want of room, I had placed out under the old lights, that had been useless for years, many of them never having been used since the death of my grandfather. Still, I was thankful for those old frames, as but for them I should never have got my Christines so forward as I had done, though they were the first cuttings I struck.

After he had smoked a pipe or two, Mr. Rose took me into a large shed at the end of his garden, in which stood two immense stacks of lights, which had been used to cover in a greenhouse sixty feet long, that he had been compelled to remove, to make the alterations he required; and these, he

told me, I should have "for an old song," when I got on a bit, as they had long been in his way, and that to do any real good, I must cover the whole rood of ground with glass as soon as I was able to do so.

I had also, through a little quiet conversation with his daughter, while he was having "forty winks,"—during which he let his pipe fall and broke it,—learnt that her father had contracted with Government for supplying one of the new parks for the people with flowers; and that among the geraniums specified was the "Christine," which, she said, "father must have got, whatever the cost might have been, or it would seriously have affected his contract, if it had been strictly enforced."

This, then, was why he had made such a clearage amongst my plants, and caused me to become a sharer in his good fortune; and I began to look at my success with rather a doubtful eye, and quite from another point of view.

I thought to myself, as I walked home, "What a connection I should have opened for myself, if, instead of disposing of the whole fifty dozen of this scarce and favourite flower in the way I have done, I had dispersed it among the florists in the trade; why, the price I have obtained, large as it is, would be a trifle in comparison with my supplying so many of the great salesmen with what they will now have a great difficulty in obtaining."

I had nothing now left but what any florist could readily supply; whereas, if I had retained my Christines, I might have gone into the market and made my own terms with at least a score of influential florists, by getting them to take so many dozens of common "bedding-out" plants, along with every single dozen of Christines. He may well be "as pleased as Punch."

I thought to myself, "I should have done a great deal better in the end, if I had scattered my plants about at a shilling a dozen less than he has paid me for them, though I am grateful to him for having purchased the first lot."

I remembered that change which came over his countenance when I made my first bargain with him, and he said, "there ought not to be any favour shown in business," and that I thought at the time those who had called him "a hard nail," had hit upon the truth, and struck it on the head: for I felt as if he had "got the best of me," and that I was not anything of a man of business compared with him. Then I thought of the anecdote my father was so fond of repeating about Billings the furniture broker, who once asked a pound for an old picture he had given a shilling for, and to his great surprise got it, without any attempt at abatement; then went raving and swearing about the house, and declaring he had lost four pounds, for he said, "Had I asked five pounds, I should have got it;" and I thought how much I was like him.

A few days afterwards, one of Mr. Rose's carmen called, with a light van, in which he sent his plants to the flower-show. The order was in Mary Rose's handwriting. I was to deliver ten dozen of my choice Christines in "forty-eights." Instead of the order, the man made a mistake, and first gave me the invoice, which of course I opened.

Ah! he might well be "as pleased as Punch." I never had the heart to tell either my mother or sister what he charged a dozen for those geraniums, but it almost made me wink again when I looked at the figures; and I said to myself, "Live and learn, George; everybody is made to pay for experience: but never while I live again, when I am on my way to the great flower-market with a choice sample, will I

sell the whole stock to the first bidder I meet with on the way, but first see what call there is for it."

Instead of congratulating myself, as I had done, in having got three pounds fifteen more than I calculated upon, when I first set out with my two beautiful samples, I might—had I known what I did after seeing that invoice—after allowing the salesman to get cent. per cent.—have realised—but I will not put down the amount, for Mr. Rose was always very kind to me.

I had many a pleasant ride.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT I STILL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH, AND WHAT I THINK OF DOING.

YOUNG as I then was, it is not to be wondered at that I was a little too much elated at my first great success; and that, having done so well with at least one half of my plants, I felt a little bit too certain that I should be equally successful with the remainder. I was not long in finding my mistake out, and then

I began to think I was justly punished for envying the good fortune of Mr. Rose in obtaining my rare geraniums. I now began to look at things in a new light, and that was the right one.

Supposing I had gone into the market instead of meeting with him as I had done, the very utmost I should have asked a dozen for my Christines in the large pots would have been five shillings. Would the tradesmen have offered me more than I asked? Such a thing was unheard of. Then, after selling a few dozens, as I should have done, could I honestly have charged one florist more than I had charged another when I heard that there was a demand for the plant, and that it was rather scarce? Had I done so, they would have called it making "fish of one and flesh of another," and never dealt with me again.

Mr. Rose, then, was my best customer after all, and I had not sold my choice plants for "a mess of pottage." More than that, I was thankful they enabled him to keep up the contract he had made for the new park, without going to an unreasonable outlay; for I ascertained through his daughter afterwards, that the ten dozen he first sent for were dispersed among a few florists he wished to oblige, and that through doing so, he run short, and had to pay even more than he charged them for what he was again compelled to repurchase. I saw clearly enough that I should not after all have obtained so much for them as I had got, excepting now and then for a single plant, and that the profit would have gone into the pockets of the great salesmen.

I found it made a wonderful difference when I had to get out the truck, and take a dozen of this, that, and the other, mixed—three or four of a sort—to the little seedsmen, who only served a few choice customers; for they examined every

plant, and if in the hurry of moving I was unfortunate enough to break off but a branch, I had to replace it with another plant, and sometimes make a journey for the purpose.

And when several of these petty "florists," as they were called, took an order for a dozen or two of bedding-plants, I either had to go myself, or send my father, to plant them out, as these poor middlemen had no one competent to do such a job as it ought to be done; and it would have got us a bad name if the flowers we sent had perished through not having been "bedded out" properly.

Then they wanted to open an account; but this in most instances I declined, quite certain that if they could not pay me out of the money they received for the plants—often before they were delivered—they couldn't after they had spent it. Of course I charged extra for flowers we had to take home and plant out; and in many instances, where I had to receive the money for the little seedsmen who had sold them, I felt quite ashamed at taking the amount charged; for some of them were not even content with cent. per cent. profit.

I had none of this trouble with the regular florists.

As to them, I had only to deliver what was ordered, receive the money, or draw my little account at the month's end, though some of them turned down the screw rather hard, which I scarcely wondered at when I saw some of the plants that came in from the country, and heard the prices they were sold at.

But there was one thing in my favour, and that I soon discovered, which was, that the fine healthy-looking country-grown plants could not stand the smoke and stifling air of London like mine, which, so to speak, were "to the manner born," having been nursed in it ever since they were cuttings two inches high, and many of the cuttings themselves first budded

into life in Lambeth, to be afterwards struck and grown into flowers, which might be called almost indigenous.

Dozens of my own plants, during the course of the summer, had I to bed out in place of those which had come from the far-away country, and gone off, unable to survive in London air—especially calceolarias and verbenas. It is true enough, whenever I delivered a dozen or two of my own plants, bought at first hand from myself, I always took a little fresh loam with me in the barrow, if I had to bed them out, and put them in that, instead of the foul-smelling ground they must otherwise have occupied; and that was one great reason why all our plants lived. It was a little trouble, but it won me a good name as a flower-grower.

But, with the exception of Mr. Rose, my best customers were the street-hawkers, or costermongers as they are called, who are always ready to purchase anything if they can see a way of turning a penny by it, whether it be fish, fruit, or flowers. Many of them were old acquaintances of my father's, and had had what they called "many a deal with him," for radishes were never too big nor too hot for their customers; and as to lettuces that were beginning to run, why, as they said, "one meal might be got off the top, and as good as a whole lettuce left for the next;" and I think the larger and older the rhubarb was the better they liked it; for, as they used to say, "our customers care more about the size of the sticks than they do for the flavour or tenderness."

A plant full of bloom, though it would never put out another bud, suited them best. They used to say, "What's the odds; the kids will always either be watering it, or pulling it out of the pot to see what it's like underneath; and if it amuses them, that's all their mothers care for."

One scamp, who spent nearly all his money in drink, got two or three dozen of empty pots in exchange for a flower or two, came and filled them with earth thrown up beside the railway, dug up a lot of plantain that had not shown for seed, and sold every one before night for a new Indian primrose that flowered at the end of summer. "If they live," said he, "they'll have a bit of nice fresh seed for their birds, and that won't be dear at twopence." Yet those who were taken in, as I heard afterwards, with a few exceptions, quite enjoyed the disappointment of their more irritable neighbours, who called the unprincipled costermonger "everything but a gentleman" when asked if their Indian primroses had bloomed yet. For several months, Ragged Joe said, "I gave those streets a wide berth, that I had supplied with plants from Ingee."

As I had no right to interfere in what they did beyond my father's garden, I could only express my disapproval, and manage them in the best way I could. I should have had nothing but abuse had I offended them, and lost their custom besides, and that would have been of consequence to me, as they cleared out all such plants as I could not have offered to respectable nurserymen, and half-a-crown a dozen was a great deal better than throwing them on the weed-heap, which I should have done had they not taken them off my hands; for many of them were plants I could not warrant as healthy, though they might recover from the fly.

But I had greater trials to contend against than those caused by the costermongers, for with them I had only to keep my temper to have everything my own way; my other troubles arose from what I must call my retail customers, many of whom had dealt with us beforetime, when they required fresh vegetables.

There were hundreds of houses about the neighbourhood with a bit of ground, either at the front or back, invariably called the garden; and in such places the hawkers found their best customers, for they would buy anything that looked green and was alive, not objecting even to a root of southernwood. Some of these had experienced so many failures, that they resolved to have their plants direct from the nursery, for I must admit that I had been bold enough to have a sign painted, on which I announced myself as "Nurseryman and Florist;" though if any customer had wanted a dozen young fruit-trees, I must have gone out and purchased them.

Many of these were troublesome customers, and compelled me to lay down a rule, and adopt it, which was, that I would not undertake to bed the plants out if they took less than half-a-dozen, for which I charged two-and-sixpence. In delivering plants which I had to put in the ground for such customers as these, I found it a great saving of time to take my spade with me, for when told that the ground was already dug, I generally found that the gardeners had been little Polly with the fire-shovel, or Billy with a knife, or Tommy with his father's trowel; and I knew beforehand what would be the fate of my plants under such management, bed them out carefully as I might.

Some of these back-yards, or gardens, were a tolerable size, with room enough for a good oval-shaped bed in the centre; but then the houses were full of lodgers; and though the landlady laid claim to the garden as her own, the ground was free to all the house.

How could my plants grow where it was washing-day all the week, and clothes were hung out over them, not only to dry, but to drain? and when the clothes-lines broke, which was

pretty often, down came sheets, and blankets, and heavy counterpanes, and I know not what besides on the healthy plants I had bedded-out with so much care, and I was blamed because they did not grow. Grow, indeed! How could they? when mats were shaken over them every morning, and boiling water from greens and potatoes drained on the ground; where at night the cats mustered to fight, and by day the children played at horses, or keeping school, or danced to the organ-grinder who was heard in the street; garments fluttered over my geraniums, great circling crinolines overhung my calceolarias, while they brushed and aired their cotton-velvets above the delicate verbenas I had bedded out in my best loam.

Then the children took them up, got a jug of water, made a dirt-pie in the hole, by stirring it well together, then, if they did not forget, put the plants in again just before bed-time; while the lodgers threw their ashes, squeezed their blue-bags, and emptied their scalding suds over them. Sometimes the children got the scissors, cut a plant into three or four, and divided it equally, to set in what they called their "little gardens."

Then, after my plants had been left to the management of these various florists, I was summoned to look at them, and asked why they had not grown? and after explaining why, in the best way I could, and never losing my temper, I generally succeeded in calming the irritated landlady by selling her, cheap, two or three showy flowers in pots, and advising her in future to keep her garden on the window-sill, and bring her plants in at night: for I soon found out that their anger could be soothed by gentle reasoning, and making the truth plain, without blaming any one in particular.

My mother used to say, that when a child I was always good-

tempered, and I strove to keep so as I grew older, and that was why I got on so well with the costermongers; and it is really marvellous, if a person will but think and listen, what little cause there is at times to become angry, even with those who shout and grow red in the face for nothing; for your doing the same will only cause you to reply improperly, and lose the thread of your reasoning, making you produce a great noise instead of a good argument.

Busy as I had been up to the middle of summer, I never missed a week without calling at the Reformatory; and as Mr. Rose had several horses, he would insist upon my getting into the saddle at times, so that I had many a pleasant ride.

I have no doubt that the warm forward spring, which had been so favourable to all the rest of my plants, encouraged the spreading of the green fly, which made great ravages amongst my verbenas, attacking them almost as soon as they had fairly struck, and before the foliage was strong enough to recover again after they had undergone a powerful fumigation with tobacco-rag. I lost many dozens of these, though I recovered the loss in some measure by replacing them with mignonette, which grew very fine and flowered early, as also did my balsams, both grown out of the greenhouse under cold lights. Nor was I less successful with my fuchsias and heliotropes; in short, with everything excepting my verbenas and calceolarias, though nothing proved near so profitable as my Christine geraniums, of which I sold several single plants to private customers for a crown each, and might have got nearly as much in the trade, but for my promise to Mr. Rose.

I had had everything against me, except the favourable spring; for, at the time I ought to have struck my first cuttings, so as to have had them forward enough to have yielded

other cuttings, to have struck again early in spring, I was busy building my greenhouse, which, by the time it was finished, ought to have been filled with good-sized plants, in "thumbs" at least, and strong enough with heat to have kept increasing throughout the winter.

But the warm and sunny February and March advanced what I had struck, full a month; so far, I was very fortunate. I considered that I had, one way and another, escaped without a fair trial; that I had not encountered all the difficulties I might expect to meet with in a fair average of years. My taking such a large order for bedding-plants of Mr. Rose, was owing to his contract for the new park. That was something quite out of the usual way. Then again, being fortunate enough to possess so many Christines, when they were so scarce, was more a matter of good luck than good judgment; so that, what with one thing and another, I was compelled to admit that I had gained at least ten pounds, through these chances, more than I should have done had I gone fairly and without favour into the regular trade; for three shillings a dozen was a good price for bedding-plants in "thumbs," which were often sold for half-a-crown.

One thing I was satisfied about, and that was, I could have sold treble the quantity of scarlet geraniums and calceolarias, if I had grown them; and with another and a larger greenhouse I was certain to make much more off our rood of ground than ever my father had got from the whole acre at the best of times.

Mr. Rose's daughter had times and times again sent to me for plants, after I had sold out; and, in one of her notes had written, "Why don't you fetch away those two great stacks of lights father offered you, and begin building another green-

house or two—I would, if I were you. Father doesn't want the money; and I am sure you could pay off five shillings out of every pound's worth of plants we take, easy enough, and I could have sold a hundred or two dozens more of your 'Tom Thumbs' this summer, if you had sent them me to sell. I told your mother, if you didn't send for the lights, I should have them put into one of our vans, and come riding on the top of them myself, to shame you;" and she had signed herself "Polly with a long pole," hinting, as my dear sister said, "that I wanted stirring up," for she was very familiar with us all by this time, never allowing more than a week to pass over without visiting my mother and sister.

I liked the advice well enough, and knew that I could pay five shillings out of every twenty I received from them, easy enough, and that it would pay well in the end, for the glass sashes were the greatest expense, and would occupy a deal of time if I had to make them. Still, I had a great objection to running into debt; it had long been an old saying in our family, "Never put out your arm further than you can draw it back when you like." I had paid for all my pots; paid back my sister Jane's money; and given my mother twenty pounds to carry us over the winter, and didn't owe a shilling anywhere by the time I had cleared out all my plants; and even then, left a good stock on hand to supply me with fresh cuttings. I could not hope to do better than I had done the next year, unless I extended my greenhouse, and to do that I must again run into debt.

If I had the two stacks of lights of Mr. Rose, a month would be quite long enough time to build another, and a much larger greenhouse; and we had bricks enough for the walls, flues, chimneys, and everything. I sat down to reckon what forty

lights, three feet by eight, would cost me, if I made them, and the cost of the glass alone startled me.

There was a boiler, and a lot of iron piping, that had been used to heat some building which had to be taken down for the new railway; it was lying in a yard where they sold building materials, and could be bought, I was told, for the price of old iron. If I paid Mr. Rose for the lights in plants, could I not raise money enough, with what little there was owing to me, to purchase the iron-work, build myself a sixty-feet greenhouse, and heat it with hot water? It was, for me, a great undertaking; but then it would place me on a level with the first flower-growers of the day; for Mr. Rose had clearly proved to me the advantage there was in striking, and heating a greenhouse with hot-water pipes, which everywhere kept up an equal temperature.

I could have Jane's ten pounds again, for she had refused to replace it in the savings' bank,—"hoping I might want it," was her reason. The potter had offered to supply me with any quantity of pots on credit, until the next season. What, then, was there to fear? If fortunate, I should be able to pay double and treble the amount of debts I might owe. Still I hesitated.

Having pretty well cleared my house of plants, I again attended to my duties at the Reformatory, and was delighted at the progress the boys had made while I was away: the vegetables they had supplied the house with gave the greatest satisfaction; and I promised Bill, Harry, and the gipsy-boy, if they continued to improve as they had already done, I would speak to Mr. Rose in their behalf, and get him, in the course of another summer, to employ them in the new park he was laying out.

By the end of summer I began striking my new cuttings, resolving to be early enough for the next season, and to have much larger plants than I had hitherto grown, especially of a new geranium, which had the most beautiful foliage I had ever seen, and, as I believed, was not known, never having seen a plant of it in the market. I got them from the same place where I obtained the cuttings of my "Christines."

No wonder that in my many pleasant rides I went to visit the old Elizabethan Manor-house, to which I was so greatly indebted for my first success, and felt grateful as I looked down from the bridge into the ancient moat, for the favour I had received from the indolent old gardener. He had no idea of the value or rarity of the new cuttings he had again given to my father; for, as he said, "Ours is such an odd, out-of-the-way place, that hardly anybody comes to it, and the lady doesn't see much company, nor very often come into the garden."

My sister Jane was the first to point out the beautiful markings of the foliage, and in her poetical way she called the plant, the "Lady with the Scarlet Zone," though that was not its name.

A beautiful cottage near the River Mole.

CHAPTER XI.

SHOWING HOW "IT SELDOM RAINS BUT IT POURS."

WHETHER it was the fresh air that circulated so freely through my greenhouse, the odour arising from my plants, or the success of my new undertaking, which put Jane into such good spirits, or all combined together, one thing was certain, my sister was fast recovering, and instead of lying on her back, as she had done, day and night, she was now able to sit up for hours together, with only a pillow or two to support her. This was a great comfort to us all, for the doctor said, Nature was doing more for her than ever he had been able to do; and though he might look in now and then, he should no longer

charge for his attendance. He had not sent his bill in, as he usually did, the preceding Christmas. "You may look at my garden, George," he said, "when spring comes, and put a few pretty plants in to please my good lady, and that will be payment enough for my account." I had done so, and got many an order through it from his friends, for there was no one to trample down and destroy the plants I bedded out in the doctor's garden. I had also been rich enough to send her, for a few weeks, to a beautiful cottage near the river Mole.

Through having to lie down on her back ever since she was a little girl, and being wheeled out in her cot into the garden, when the weather was fine, my sister had at times the strangest fancies that ever took possession of the busy brain. This, no doubt, arose through her looking so constantly at the sky, when she could not turn her head without great pain.

She used to call the sky her garden, and the ever-changing clouds her flower-beds; the deep crimson of sunset was her mountain of roses, and the depths of blue between the full-flushed clouds her valleys of hyacinths, while the deepening purple of evening was her bed of dark violets, shutting up for the night.

The pale golden hues of morning were her primrose patches scattered about the sky, and for every shifting hue of the clouds she found a fanciful resemblance to the colours of various flowers; or where one went sailing along silvered and wing-shaped, it became in her eye an inhabitant of heaven, moving along between the slopes and terraces and crystal rock-work of the sky, from which drooped every variety of bloom.

Continual gazing on the face of heaven had so sharpened her sight that, of an evening, she could see stars several minutes before they were visible to the rest of us, as she proved by

telling where they would appear, between such as we were enabled to see. The stars were her daisies, scattered broadcast over the unbounded field of heaven, and many a time while I was busy, and listening to her as she lay looking up at the clouds through the greenhouse lights, I forgot myself, and seemed borne away, as if reading the pages of John Bunyan, to the Delectable Mountains, among the shining ones, where, high up and from afar, the silver bells of Beulah seemed ever softly sounding.

And sometimes she would point upward and say, "Oh, George, wouldn't it be delightful to walk along that blue valley, between those beautiful banks, white over with snowdrops"—for such she called the piled clouds that rose on each side of the vale-like level of blue. I also think that turning her eyes heavenward so constantly, opened stronger depths of perspective between the ranges of cloudland, which a chance glance at the ever-changing picture never revealed to a casual beholder.

Still, dreamer as she was at times, and had been ever since her great affliction, which often caused her to be left for hours with nothing but her fancy and the grand picture-gallery of the sky to amuse her—especially during the second season, when my mother had to come out, and lend a helping hand in the garden—Jane was, when she quitted what I called her Cloudland, gifted with as clear notions regarding matters of business as if her whole thoughts were devoted to nothing besides.

She would turn over in her head every point of a matter placed before her in a few moments, and see the for and the against, and the final result, much more clearly than any of us, if we did what she proposed, and left undone a great many things which formed the errors in our calculations. I never in my life

knew one like her, as regarded seeing what was likeliest to succeed and what to fail, unless it was Mr. Rose's daughter; and I often think her judgment had been trained up somehow through dabbling so much among figures, for she was the readiest reckoner I had ever known, and I do believe if her father had asked her how much a hundred thousand plants would have come to at the tenth of a farthing each, she could have told him in a few seconds.

She came one day to tea, and took out her little gold pencil-case, "to stir me up with it," as she said, and in a few minutes showed how many extra hundreds of dozens of plants I could grow if I got her father's lights, and run up another greenhouse sixty feet long by fourteen wide. She also showed what they would produce at the lowest price it was possible for them to fetch, and as I had ascertained that I could purchase the boiler and iron pipes for about five pounds, as they would be liable to get broken if left about, she made an entry of every item of the outlay, and showed my sister Jane that there was nothing to prevent me from succeeding and leaving a great margin for profit, if I did as they advised me. "Father said I was to tel you, George, that almost all the bedding-plants in the new park that we had from the country failed this summer, and that those he had of you were nearly the only ones that bore any bloom worth looking at, and that he would take four or five hundred dozen next season, if you could supply him."

Such encouragement was very pleasant, but still I went on in my old way, keeping my few choice cuttings back, that had such beautiful foliage, and resolved that they should not be seen until after the next season. I attended to the Reformatory in the winter, as I had done the season before; and, excepting growing a much larger quantity of bedding-plants

for Mr. Rose, the progress of my second year was but a repetition of my first. Even my father took and bedded out a vast quantity of plants, which I supplied the great florist with for his private customers, and was quite happy when he came home and threw his week's wages into my mother's lap.

Mary Rose—we now all called her Mary—was a constant visitor at our house, and a pretty time I had of it because I wouldn't do this, that, and the other, as she wished me, for she had won my sister Jane to her side. The pipes and the boiler were still unsold, and she pretended to be quite angry with me for not "launching out," as she called it. "All last autumn father was asking if you'd been to fetch away the lights," she said, "and now here's another summer, and yonder they are still. Why don't you cover all the rood of ground with greenhouses?"

I thought there was something rather tantalising in the tone as she finished with, "Remember, faint heart never yet won fair lady."

It was, after all, very kind of the wealthy florist's daughter to take so great an interest as she did in my welfare, poor and humble as my position was, and so much attention as was paid to her wherever she went, as I had witnessed on one or two occasions at the Flower Shows, where her father was an exhibitor, and had carried off some of the prizes.

It is true the young gentlemen who shook hands with her, and made such a great fuss over her, were the sons of great nurserymen and florists, many of them, no doubt, as rich as Mr. Rose himself; and when I told my sister Jane that I thought the young lady pushed herself a little too forward among those "swells," for such their dandified dresses bespoke them, she burst out laughing, called me "poor dear fellow,"

and said "I was looking through green," though what she meant by that I did not clearly understand, though I knew green was called the colour of "jealousy."

Jealous, indeed! and her father said to be a man worth thirty thousand pounds, with his houses and funded property, and I uneasy because I did not possess as many pounds as he did thousands; for twenty or thirty would have enabled me to have surmounted every difficulty, without getting into debt, excepting for the lights, which were to be paid for in plants, and the ten pounds I was to again borrow of my sister.

I went outside, and stood thinking of what I had done, and what I could still do for the best, and as I run my eye over the twelve hundred square yards of ground, I thought how splendid it would look with two rows of greenhouses all the way along it, and a wide road between, and wondered whether it would ever be my good fortune to realise such a wish. "It may," I said to myself. "Then, instead of wearing corduroy trowsers, and nailed boots, and fustian jackets, I may be able to put my feet in a bit of patent leather, wear my broad cloth, take off my hat to Miss Rose, and 'hope I see her well,' just as those 'swell' seedsmen's sons did at the Flower Shows."

She wouldn't tell them they wanted stirring up like bears with long poles, or that they were faint-hearted; and as to advising them to run into debt, she knew they had no need to do that, for if they had purchased anything they were always shouting out, so that everybody might hear them, that "they would send a cheque," so that all the world might know their fathers had money in the bank. Yes, it was their fathers who had made their fortunes. I wonder what they would have done if left to themselves, as I was, and only a rood of ground to turn themselves in?

I went into the greenhouse. Jane had come in, unheard or unseen by me, so intent was I in "nursing my wrath to keep it warm," though I had nothing in the world really to annoy me, excepting a want of capital to carry out my plan, for so far as I had gone, everybody said "I had done wonders." I was ashamed of myself for feeling as I had done, and looking with something like envy on others who were better off than myself.

How did it happen? What had given rise to it? Somehow, though I could not for the life of me tell in what way, Mary Rose was at the bottom of it all. She had been "at" me again that very day.

My sister was sitting in the large easy chair I had purchased and presented her with, the back of which could be raised or lowered, or made to form a couch were she disposed to lie down.

"You went off in such a huff, George," said my sister, holding out her hand, and looking at me with that old affectionate expression which had always drawn me to her by its golden link, for I loved her as dearly as I did my mother, "that you didn't give me time to tell you all that Mary had said, and what she wanted you to do for her."

"Wanted me to do for her!" I replied, echoing the words in surprise. "I am very sure there is nothing within my power that I would not do for her, for she is too sensible to ask anything unreasonable. What is it?"

"She wants you to be her banker," said my sister, looking down and blushing, "and she gave me this money to give you to take care of; she says it is what she has saved out of her salary as her father's clerk, and you may allow her three per cent. for it if you like, for that is the most, she says, her father

can get her for it; and she sha'n't want it for years, and she begs of you to make use of it, and get your large greenhouse up as soon as possible." She placed a neatly done up heavy little packet in my hand, outside of which Miss Rose had simply marked the amount as "£50." I knew by the weight it was all in gold."

"You should not have taken this, my dear Jane," I said. "I am sure you would not advise me to take advantage of her kind offer, which, were I even disposed, I could not do, without acquainting her father, for she is but seventeen. You must return it with my thanks, and tell her I am very grateful for her kindness."

"But she told both her father and mother what she was going to do with it before coming here," said my sister, "and I do think, my dear brother, nothing in the world would make Mary happier than your accepting of it, nor anything give her greater pain than your refusal. You have already proved by your success what you can do, even under great disadvantage, and I feel sure by the end of the next season you will be able to return her every sovereign, along with the thirty shillings interest. It is kindly meant, George, and offered in a most delicate way, and to refuse will be to give pain to a true and attached friend. I advise you to take it, for I know no one worthier than Mary Rose: and look how in every way she has tried to serve you."

I sat before my sister on the lowest ledge on which I ranged my plants, holding the little packet of gold in my hand—for she had refused to take it back—thinking what I should do, and well weighing every word Jane had uttered. Miss Rose had been very kind to me, so had her father, and I do not think I should have refused such an offer from him, as it would

have seemed more in the way of business, and I could have paid him the greater portion back in plants. At last I said, "Your ten pounds, with what I have owing to me, will go a long way, and I can arrange about paying Mr. Rose for the lights. I would rather not accept this favour. It is very kind of her. Do you think I ought to take it?"

"I do," replied my sister; "and get the bricklayer Mr. Rose recommended to you; he is the best greenhouse-builder known, and will put up the boiler and pipes properly, and erect you a long cutting-pit where you can strike your plants on slate on hot-water pipes much better and in half the time you have done. Pay him his price, and attend to your cuttings at once. Then, as Mary says, you will have large plants at spring that will bring in five or six shillings a dozen instead of those little things in 'thumbs,' or 'sixties,' which anybody can grow. Nor must you mind giving a large sum, she says, for a scarce flower, for they can get almost any price for what is new and rare. Look how well you did with your Christines the first year."

"Well, it seems that you and Miss Rose have been laying your heads together to some purpose," I said; "and were the money my own I should follow the advice in everything. But you know, sister, what a dislike I have to contracting debts; how my father has always spoken against it, and how all our lives we have prided ourselves on living within our means, and not owing a shilling to anybody. I have done so hitherto. Yonder is the postman; I wonder what news he has brought us?"

"Something for you, no doubt," said my sister, looking through the greenhouse door. "But I do not agree with you about contracting debts or borrowing money on interest when you see your way clear to doubling or trebling it; also when

time itself is money, and by availing yourself of it, and having the advantage of capital you can employ a thorough workman, and have first-rate greenhouses, and next season be able to produce a thousand plants for every hundred that you now grow. Mother is tapping at the window; go, see what she wants, and if you won't take my advice, leave me for a while to get up into Cloudland and forget myself while dreaming among the flower-beds of heaven."

I placed the packet of gold in my sister's lap, and went in to answer my mother's summons. Father was coming for me, and was not far from the greenhouse door. "Make haste; such good news, my lad," said my father, placing his hand on my shoulder. "But I think more of the handsome way they've done it, and what they've said about us, than I do of the money. Your mother's so pleased, I do believe she would jump out of her skin if she could."

My mother was at the door with the tears of joy in her eyes and an open letter in her hand, and her first words were, "Oh, George, this great joy is almost too much for me, speaking of your father as they have done—though he deserves it all—and then to send ——"

"My dear mother, if it be such good news, Jane must partake of it," I said; "and I will not hear another word until she is present. Let us go into the greenhouse. She was just preparing to start to Cloudland when I left her, and this good news may put off the journey." So saying, I led the way.

The letter was as follows:—

"The Directors of the Junction Railway present their compliments to Mr. Able, and beg to apologise for their long delay, and to express their approval of the honest, manly, and straightforward way in which he has met their views at every point,

not only in making an average return of what his garden yielded, but in leaving the compensation to be awarded entirely in their own hands; and they have great pleasure in presenting him with a cheque for 180*l.*, being the return of three years' 'produce of his garden.'"

"And now," said my father, giving me the cheque, "you may cover the whole rood of ground with greenhouses as soon as you like, George, and make me man instead of master, for you will do better with the money than ever I should; and it is yours to do what you like with. Why, you have got as much a year already, by covering in a few perches with glass, as ever I got off the whole acre. Ah, mother," he added, and his voice trembled, "I thought it would have broken my heart, and I never should have got over it, when I received the notice from the railway company; and look how well they have behaved to me, and how kindly they have spoken of me, and how successful George has been, though I did set my face against his plans a bit at first. But I never will again, let him do what he may. Old heads are not always the best, I see, after all."

"I shall not touch a single shilling of that money," I said, giving the cheque to my mother; "you must keep it against 'a rainy day.' You see my borrowing powers are already great, if I wished to avail myself of them," I added, taking up the parcel of sovereigns and explaining how they had been presented; at which both my father and mother were agreeably surprised, not having heard a word of the matter. "I shall avail myself of Mr. Rose's offer of the lights; of Jane's ten pounds, which will pay the bricklayer; the boiler and pipes I can raise enough for; and when I run short, dear mother, I shall fly to you, as I have always done; and with all

the better heart, as I helped to fill the purse which you hold for the benefit of us all."

"And will you not become Mary Rose's banker, as she wishes you?" said my sister, holding out the money; "she will be greatly hurt if you do not."

"I will take charge of that," said my mother, "until I see her. In one thing I must have my own way, George, and that is in giving you back the money you have placed in what you call the common purse, as you want it to carry over the winter with. You shall owe me the twenty pounds, if you like to be in your mother's debt, though I can't well see how that can be, as you earned every shilling of it. But this I am determined upon, you shall finish your great greenhouse without going into debt or drawing a single penny from any one but myself or your sister, unless Mr. Rose likes to pay you beforehand for a lot of your plants. You never disobeyed me in your life, George, nor will you now."

She kissed me, and I stood silent, my heart too full to speak, while my father's hand rested on my shoulder and Jane's hand was clasped in mine; and I could not help thinking how, only two years ago, father and I were hoeing on the very spot on which we then stood, too sad even to talk to one another.

She sat in the rustic porch and told me of their loss.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW I RAISED THE MONEY TO BUILD ANOTHER GREENHOUSE.

I ADHERED firmly to my resolution of not touching a penny of the £180 my father had received as compensation for the loss of his garden, the more so as I knew on what a slender thread the success of a florist sometimes hangs. I had heard

of seasons when the whole stock of calceolarias and verbenas had gone off, from some cause or another, that could never clearly be discovered, though the conclusion arrived at was a blight in the air. I might lose my plants through such a visitation. I knew a gardener in the country who had been ruined by such a disaster, and the tears coursed down the cheeks of his pretty daughter as she sat in the rustic porch and told me of their loss. Were it so, it would be a comfort to me to know that my parents had so large a sum invested to fall back upon in case of need; if not, it would be one of the greatest pleasures in my life to add to their little store; for I determined that no speculation of mine should ever diminish it. As to falling back upon the money I had again placed in my dear mother's hands to carry her through until spring, that would compel her to break the little bulk I resolved should not be touched under any consideration on my account, and so far be as broad as it was long either way. My mother must retain the twenty pounds I had handed over to her, and I must build my large greenhouse, sixty feet by fourteen, to be heated with hot water. But how? I would go speak to Mr. Rose.

I knew through Jane that Mrs. Rose and her daughter were coming to tea that day, so, availing myself of the opportunity, I excused myself under the plea of an appointment on business, and set off, feeling pretty certain that I should find my old friend all alone. But I was mistaken. I however soon found him in the neighbourhood, at the house of a market-gardener, a man with a large family; and there was my old friend, sitting at the door-porch, with all the children swarming about him, and his ale-glass in his hand. He soon rose and came away with me.

He was glad to see me in his usual hearty way; and as soon

"All the children swarming about him." Chap. 12, p. 114.

as we entered the house, rang the bell for Betty to fill a jug of ale, for he had no notion of anybody coming to sit down in his parlour without taking something, and he knew nothing he could recommend so safely as his own strong, wholesome, home-brewed ale. "Tea was only intended for women," he used to say; "and he only took a dish of it now and then, just to keep them in countenance."

He had been looking over some catalogues that had been sent him by various seedsmen, nurserymen, and florists; but these he at once, as I could see, thrust aside, and, as I thought, was glad to get rid of them. He knew that his "old woman and Polly," as he always called them before those he liked and was familiar with, "had gone to take tea with my mother, and that was why he went out, and he thought it very kind of me to come and keep him company while they were gone."

"I knew you would be glad to see me," I said; "but I came for something more than to keep you company. I want your advice and help to build my new greenhouse." I then explained my whole plans, and acquainted him with the estimate his clever daughter had made.

"That's right enough," he said; "we went over it together; you ought to have got it up a year ago. What can I do for you?"

How often is it the case, after one has been "beating about the bush" ever so long, a plain, straightforward "What is it?" finds us speechless?

Driven into a corner all at once, and seeing that there was only one way of getting out, I gave him what boys call a facer, hitting him bang between the eyes and ears with, "You can take two hundred and fifty dozen bedding-plants at spring; you

can charge me a moderate per-centage for paying me the money beforehand, and then I can finish my greenhouse and fill it with plants."

"That's just what I said to my dear old woman," said he, giving his great broad thigh a slap, and laughing. "'Old girl,' says I, 'George will sooner come to me than he'll be Polly's banker, glad as she would be to help him with her fifty pounds. I'll do a little more than that, George, as I did so well with the Christines the first year; I'll throw you the lights in; they are yours, my lad; and I'll send them home for you. You may give the carman a pot of beer if you like, and that's all they'll cost you."

He rose from his chair, unlocked his desk, and taking out a fifty-pound note, put it into my hand, saying, "I drew that out of the bank purposely, and told Polly to give it you, and say we would square it for plants next season, for I know you must want a little money. But nothing would go down but you must be her banker. Well, I've had my own way at last, and I'm glad of it. If that isn't enough, George, I'll find you another fifty, and that's as far as I intend going at present. Have you seen Mrs. Pollock yet?"

"I went to have a peep at her yesterday," I said, "but found she had gone. I have heard that she's a great beauty, and will make a noise."

"I'll show her you," he said, giving a quiet chuckle. "She is a beauty; the stock plant her Majesty's got, and there isn't to be another cutting taken off her until next year. This one that I've got was presented to me by young Smith for our Polly, which shows he's rather sweet on her, I suppose; for he says five guineas were offered for it, and that there is not another to be had for either love or money."

While he went into the greenhouse to get the plant, I felt thankful that I had not accepted the loan his daughter had offered me through my sister, especially after her receiving so costly a present from young Smith, who was one of the "swells," as I called them, that were constantly dancing at her heels at the flower-shows. Still, though I felt annoyed, without rightly knowing why, I could not help thinking that there was a great want of delicacy on the part of the wealthy florist's son in naming the value of the geranium he had presented to Mary Rose; it seemed to me so much like saying, "Here is five guineas for you;" and I felt that, if it had been mine, I should have acted very differently, and given it her only for its beauty.

When Mr. Rose brought it in and placed it on the table, I thought it was the very same plant that I had so carefully kept back for two years without showing it to anybody, excepting my own family, and my greenhouse was now nearly half full of it, some very large; still I had my doubts. It was one of a new class of plants just then becoming "fashionable,"—for I know not what other word to use,—on account of the beauty of its foliage The bloom of itself was nothing to look at. If I was right, it was not so scarce as the young gentleman had represented it to be, who was "rather sweet" on Miss Rose, as her father said in his homely open way. I looked again at the rich velvety bronze that encircled the centre of the leaf like a half-moon in shape, flecked here and there with bright crimson, which ran into and gave a fanciful finish to the golden zone of the leaf, and then was sure I was right. So I praised its beauty, and kept my own secret.

"Polly hasn't seen it yet," said Mr. Rose, "for young Smith only left it about an hour or so before you came, and he seemed quite disappointed because she wasn't at home."

"No doubt he was," I said, not very pleasantly, "for it is not everybody who would come and say, 'I've got a flower that I've refused five guineas for, because I wanted to give it you.'" I could hardly keep my secret.

"That's just it," he answered, looking at me out of the corner of his eye; "and if I were to tell her that, she would just send it back quicker than it came. So 'Mum's' the word with me about its value. I shall get half-a-dozen cuttings off it in autumn, and strike them over my little oven as I call it."

If he did, I thought he would be very fortunate, for it was a very slim plant—a cutting evidently struck late in spring; and I was rather glad he did not ask me to undertake the management of it, as I could not very well have declined.

I gave him an acknowledgment for the money in the form he suggested, which was, "Received on account of plants, to be delivered next season, £50;" and I determined in my own mind to make up the value of the lights he had given me for my new greenhouse in some way or another.

My sister was right, "time to me was money;" and it would answer my purpose much better to have my new greenhouse properly built, and pay well for the workmanship, while I attended to my plants, and got them in readiness for the striking-pit by the time the house was finished.

I saw my way to a many things that I could easily carry out with the money I had drawn in advance: one of which was a large striking-pit, half underground, running outside of my new greenhouse, and heated by a separate pipe fixed in the same boiler, and so contrived that, when required, I could turn on the hot water to the cutting-pit, without heating the large greenhouse. I also determined to place my silver

sand on slate, running the whole length, which would be space enough to strike a thousand or two of cuttings at a time, instead of only a few hundreds, as I had done for want of more room.

Betty made us some tea, of which Mr. Rose took half a cup, after finishing his frizzled ham, poached eggs, and jug of ale, "just to keep me company," as he said, "for very little tea did for him," as very little of his strong ale did for me, though I joined him heartily in his tea, ham, and eggs.

After tea our conversation was about growing flowers; and I got a good many hints from him, which I afterwards adopted; one of which was, to fill three or four lights with Intermediate Stocks, which required no heat, only growing under cold frames, and keeping dry through the winter, and letting them have air when the weather was fine. These he said he could use some hundreds of, as they did to "prick" out anywhere, and needed no potting, only taking up carefully at spring, with as much earth to the roots as possible, during rainy weather.

"That is one of the great secrets of gardening, George," he said: "put out your bedding-plants, after a good night's rain, and they never feel the moving, especially if a shower or two comes after they are just planted out. There's no watering like that which comes straight down from heaven, my lad."

I stayed so late that his wife and daughter returned before I left, and, instead of shaking hands with me as usual, Mary threw the little packet of gold on the table, which my sister had given her back, and said, "There, father, take care of this money for me, please. George refuses to become my banker." I felt rather confused as I returned my thanks, and hardly remember what I said.

"George will not require it now, Polly," said her father.

"I have bargained with him for more plants. But, look, here's a present for you from young Smith; he left it himself, either with his love or his compliments, I'm sure I forget which. This is a Mrs. Pollock."

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to him," said Mary, scarcely looking at the plant; "didn't he leave me a lock of his hair at the same time?" Then turning to me, good humouredly, she said, "Your hair doesn't want poodling, George, as it curls naturally; if it did, I should recommend you to go where Charley Smith and his companions get frizzly-wigged,—at the hairdresserman's, who gets up the French poodles so nice and curly, which you see sold about the streets."

"I'm sure, Mary, it was very kind of him, to come all the way from Covent Garden to make you a present of this beautiful plant," said her mother; "and if he does go every morning and get his hair curled, I see no harm in it."

"Oh, he's a dear sweet youth," said Mary, with a merry laugh. "Do you know, George, he was so attentive to me at the last flower-show, that he took out his pocket handkerchief—which I believe was clean—and asked me how I liked the scent, which he said had cost, I don't know how much a bottle, and wanted to send me some; but when I told him I should require at least a gallon to rinse my small things in, such as cuffs and collars, I think he became rather hard of hearing. Charley Smith is a regular 'cure,'" and she bounded merrily out of the room to take off her things.

A still, old, out-of-the-way place, seldom visited.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW I GOT ON WITH MY GREENHOUSE, MISS ROSE, AND "MRS. POLLOCK."

THOUGH both my father and I assisted in erecting the large greenhouse and cutting-pit, not much credit was due to either of us for the perfect workmanship they displayed when finished. Even Mr. Rose approved of all that had been done, and, as the builder said, "if there's half a fault, he's sure to find it out."

We had a good deal of digging to do for the striking-pit, the floor of which was sunk full a yard below the ground, while the highest wall was not more than that above, and the lowest wall but little more than a foot, to give the glass roof a slope to the south. After it was finished and heated with hot water, my father declared I should never be able to breathe inside for many minutes together, as it was almost as hot as an oven.

Like the greenhouse, it was a beautiful bit of workmanship, and only six feet wide, though ten times that length.

Mr. Rose sent me two van-loads of old stock plants, some of the geraniums as big as small gooseberry bushes, which had yielded him cuttings for years, and would continue to do for years to come, if housed and attended to. Some of them were in No. 8 pots, and quite a load to lift.

Though not new, they were good old-fashioned plants, and, as he said, "always valuable." From some of them I got as many as three-score cuttings, each of which grew a good size, and was covered with bloom in the following year. Excepting now and then a few very rare things, Mr. Rose seldom struck a plant, preferring to buy what he wanted.

After I had paid for my greenhouse and cutting-pit, laid in a good stock of pots, loam, and fuel, I had not much money left out of the fifty pounds; but this I did not mind, as my outlay until spring might then be counted in shillings; nor should I have to trench on my mother's money, nor touch my sister's. When I had squared accounts with Mr. Rose, all beside would be my own; and, large as the sum was, the thought of owing it did not cost me a tithe of the anxiety that my potter's bill had done, when I sallied out to sell my Christines, so confident I of succeeding.

My father went here and there and everywhere to get me cuttings in the neighbouring villages, and I am sure he obtained many more than he otherwise would have done, through the friendship of the many market-gardeners he knew, for the florists gave to them freely what they might have withheld from a feeling of jealousy from rival flower-growers.

The dozen splendid Christines I had grown and delivered in return for the cuttings, not only gave great satisfaction, but enabled me, through another channel, to obtain the large handful of Mrs. Pollocks which I kept so secret by striking them at the far end of my pit, then placing them behind larger plants in my greenhouse in such a way as they could not be seen. The foliage alone would have betrayed me, differing as it did from nearly all other scarlet geraniums, that look almost alike to the eye until they begin to show for bloom. It was not likely to be common, or known, as my cuttings had come from a still, old, out-of-the-way place, seldom visited.

I think my father enjoyed his "gipsy-life," as he called his wanderings in search of cuttings, better than he had ever done his garden-work, for he spent many happy hours, while thus assisting me, among old friends; and my dear mother always took care that he never went out without a few shillings in his pocket. I am sure he got me the cuttings of more choice plants, through hunting up and having a pint of ale and a pipe with old acquaintances—many of whom had known my grandfather—than he would have obtained had he gone out with a well-filled purse, and offered large sums for what were given to him so freely.

I have no doubt, while talking about the changes which had taken place, the railway companies came in for a good share of abuse among those old suburban market-gar-

deners. Nor was it the plants and cuttings alone that my father brought home, for he came laden with promises as well, which, unlike the generality, made it is said "to be broken," were nearly always fulfilled, causing us to have such a succession of friendly visitors, all helping to fill my great striking-pit, that I was compelled to lay in a barrel of ale, and the half of a large Cheshire cheese, which was no sooner off the table than it was on again; so that, as my father used to say, pleasantly, "I seem to have quite enough to do to receive my visitors;" and, though he couldn't take bread-and-cheese with all, he had his small glass of ale with most of them. One day, when I went in unexpectedly, I heard my mother and Jane laughing heartily, and on inquiring the cause, found that father had been complaining of his waistcoats fitting him too tight, and asking to have them let out a little at the back.

"They oftener wanted taking in, my lad," he said to me, "when I was only a market-gardener."

Up to autumn, odd shillings still kept tumbling in from my costermonger customers, for things I had shoved into spare pots, in out-of-the-way corners, and set no store by; among such were chilies and chrysanthemums, which they carried off and sold readily.

My sister Jane could now sit upright in the easy-chair I had purchased for her, and was so industrious that nearly every cutting I struck was prepared by her; and she was so nimble-fingered and so sure of her mark with the little sharp scissors she used, that she could snip off two leaves to my one.

By her help I was able to get in hundreds of dozens of cuttings by the end of September, which must otherwise have been delayed a month later had she not assisted me. I had as fine young plants in my pots by the end of Oc-

tober as I had been able to produce up to so late as March the first year, which was five months later. What size those would be by the following May, should I be fortunate enough to keep them, might be imagined from their healthy condition: as my father said, "Nothing less than thirty-twos will be houses big enough for them to live in:" and those are very large-sized pots.

It was very hot in that deep, narrow, close striking-pit during the warm days of September, when I struck so many of my choicest cuttings. Often when I came out everything on my back was wet through with perspiration, yet I never caught cold, nor enjoyed better health in my life; and a good deal of that was no doubt owing to the kind watchful eyes of my dear mother and sister, who always took care at mealtimes that my chair was not placed in a cold draught. My finger-ends were quite sore at times through poking them into the hot moist silver sand, which, if I went down a little too deep and touched the slates that rested just above the hot water-pipes, almost fetched the skin off. I often got my cuttings forward enough to take them out of the sand and put them into "thumb-pots" in three or four days. Even my greenhouses, during the hot days of that fine autumn, were almost up to African heat, and Jane said there were times when she fancied she could see the plants grow.

I kept my long rows of Mrs. Pollock well hidden at the back by my largest plants, and said nothing when Mr. Rose came and told me that he had only succeeded in striking two cuttings, and that his "stock" plant looked very queer indeed. His daughter had no pity for his parent plant, but said, "It's been and got 'poodled' somewhere, like Charley Smith's hair, for all the leaves are curled up."

She got looking about my greenhouse, as she did everywhere else, and discovered my concealed treasure, and clapped her hands with delight. The secret I knew was safe with her.

Then she wrote an impertinent note to young Smith, returning his plant, and saying she should be sorry to lose it, but if he put a little of his nice scent on, perhaps it might revive.

Jane told me it was almost insulting, for Mary had read it to her, and that she never saw her friend in such spirits in her life as when she discovered my stock of Mrs. Pollocks: she even said, "I hope George will charge my father a guinea for every plant he sells him, which will not be a quarter of the price fixed by 'Charley is my darling.'" The plant she returned did not live many weeks, and she gave a shy, pleased, tender glance when, in my joking way, I told her "It had died of grief because she had sent it away."

I have since thought that the secret of striking my new and beautiful plant so quick, and getting it to grow so strong, was in a great measure owing to mixing with my silver sand, a heap of mould that had stood undisturbed for years at the corner of my father's garden. From all I could gather, it had been the clearing of a pond, overhung by a large tree, in which they used to dip their pans when watering the beds. The pond had been filled up with rubbish years ago, and the heap I used was old rotted leaf-mould, mixed with the settlings of the filled-up pond.

When I went over to Covent Garden, the great florists noticed me—for all the trade now knew that I had grown the Christines—and hoped if I had anything choice next year, I should let them know early, as they should be able to offer me a better price than Mr. Rose could afford to give.

I saw the returned Mrs. Pollock in Smith's window, with

three or four dwindled leaves on her, no bigger than sixpences.

Instead of George they called me Mr. Abel, and in the trade I was known as young Mr. Abel, quite as well as young Mr. Smith, though I could not yet boast of my father's cheque-book; not but what I might have come out in that style had I pleased to have accepted the cheque sent by the railway company.

I worked very hard, early and late, often writing out my labels until near upon midnight, as I made it a point of business to affix the name to every plant, even from when the cuttings were first placed in small thumbs. If I ran short of labels, I fixed my pots in rows of a dozen, put one into the first of the row, then on the following day labelled every separate pot, so that get mixed afterwards as they might, the names only required looking out, and every plant could be depended upon.

This also I had got credit for in the trade, and it gives a grower a good character when once known that every plant he sells is "true." My sister also worked much harder than I wished, though as the doctor said it did her good, and she was now quite tanned through having been so much in the greenhouse, and, as mother said, "came in with a ploughman's appetite."

When not helping me, she was writing something or another, to be called "Cloudland, and what I saw there." Both the doctor and his friend, the young curate, said it was one of the most beautiful prose poems they had ever read. I was not to be allowed to look at it until finished, though I had some idea of what it would be like, as, whenever Mary Rose called, she brought her information about the names and colours of the rarest flowers grown.

From their conversation, I could gather that the white wing-shaped clouds were to be the angels that looked after the flowers grown in heaven, and that all the children who died and became angels had a little garden high up in her "Cloudland."

The young curate used to say he never spent an hour in conversing with her without feeling himself a better man when he went away. She made us all feel very good at times, and it was almost impossible for any evil thought to enter the mind while listening to her. If we looked to earth for comfort, she turned her large reverential eyes heavenward, found it there, and brought it down to us.

She inherited her piety from my father, for in my dear mother's nature there was a great love of fun, and that was why she and Mary Rose got on so well together, though Mary was grave enough, when alone with my sister.

Mary was a great plague to me at times, making me leave off work and come in doors to partake of some dainty she had brought, and I fear that my dear mother encouraged her, for they all let her do just pretty well what she liked, for she would dance and sing, and fill our poor cottage with sunshine by her presence, making us all happy and cheerful.

There was no harm in it, only that I had to neglect my label-writing, or something or another that I did of a night in-doors, and which must be laid aside now and then to take her to some theatre or concert; and "I was a good, dear George" if I consented to accompany her, and if I didn't, she would sit silent and disappointed, spreading a kind of sadness through the house, which pervaded us all.

And what could I do, when father and mother, and sister, were all on her side, but yield to her? True, the very heartiness with which I was received by Mr. and Mrs. Rose when I took

her home, and stayed to partake of the nice little late supper, made amends for the time I had lost, and always fetched up again somehow; for there was something in Mr. Rose's earnest and tremulous voice that went to my heart when, in shaking hands at parting, he would say, "I can't tell you, George, how happy you make both myself and her mother, nor how grateful we feel when you have been so kind to Polly; it is the study of our lives to please her, for she is a downright good little lass, and I know nothing she takes so hard as when you can't find time to go out with her."

What could I do, kind as he always was to me, but strive my best to please him, even though I had to make some little sacrifice? For I could not accompany her to such places in my common every-day dress, and felt ashamed to acknowledge that she compelled me to become a "swell" on a small scale, as she was always making me fancy stocks and gaudy waistcoats, as she could do almost anything with her needle.

Then, when I put them on, what could mother and Jane do but praise their beauty? One thing, she never wanted me to get my hair "poodled," like Charley Smith, though she was always joking me because it curled of itself. She had obtained my measure somehow from Jane; and, for work! my shirt-fronts eclipsed young Smith's, who was the model of dandies. Though my spirit rebelled at such a change, in the end I submitted to it without a murmur; for I found her honest, homely father was always devising something for my benefit.

"Was I still the same George Abel," I sometimes felt disposed to ask myself, when dressing to go out with her, "that only two years ago almost felt a contempt for those rich florists' sons who did not wear fustian jackets, corduroy trousers, and nailed boots?" Of course, while out with her, my father attended

to my greenhouse fires, and left nothing important neglected that was essential to the growth of my plants.

Wherever we went Miss Rose met with somebody or another who knew her, which was through her father being an exhibitor, and sometimes a judge, at the flower-shows; and the pretty maiden was a favourite with everybody. I, as her escort, had to be introduced, and to bow and shake hands, and all that sort of thing, and I soon found that many of the florists were familiar with my name, so much had my Christines done for me. We received invitations which I had seldom time to accept, and I found that some of the young gentlemen were not very cordial in their greetings when they found how difficult it was to separate my attractive companion from me. I heard many lamentings about Mrs. Pollock having "fogged" off, and sad deploring that she had not had cuttings taken from her at first, instead of making a show of her before she was handed over to Mr. Rose, who was "too rich," they said, "to care much about working a choice plant properly."

Though a portion of the long winter was very severe, and many florists lost thousands of their young plants, I had got mine so strong and forward that, by keeping up fires night and day, and filling my long striking-pit with pots, I got over the hard frost with very little loss. Mr. Rose, as usual, helped to save me, by sending me a high-piled load of old matting, which though not unrolled for years, was dry and sound enough to keep the frost off the glass roofs.

Long before spring the secret of my Mrs. Pollock oozed out, for the plants had grown so strong and bushy that I was able to take hundreds of cuttings off them, until they were too conspicuous in my greenhouses to escape notice. In this again Mr. Rose befriended me, by carting off many dozen of bedding

plants before he wanted them, and placing them in one of his greenhouses, to give me more room for the new favourites.

How he stared when he first discovered them, rubbed his chin, then his hands, and at last said, "I'm almost afraid of asking how much a dozen this time, knowing what a price I should put on them if they were mine."

"Ten dozen of the very finest are yours without any price at all, in return for the frames you were kind enough to give me," I said. "Miss Mary and I arranged that long ago, and you know there is no appealing from her decision. Beside what you have taken away of the bedding plants, you so kindly paid me for beforehand, I have got one hundred dozen to deliver, and then I am out of your debt; and very grateful I am for the assistance you rendered me, and as a proof of it you shall have any quantity of my new geranium, and put your own price on it."

"Ten dozen are too many; a great deal too many; much more than I desire," he said. "Besides, I gave you the lights, having done so well with the Christines. But what Mary says must not be altered, I suppose. As to fixing a price on the rest, I decline doing that. Let Smith make the first offer, and I'll pay the same for what I have. But don't sell him too many."

"A month hence will be quite time enough," I replied. "I'm not afraid of anybody forestalling the market, and since I am out of your debt, I'm in no hurry to sell them. I haven't moved my last lot of cuttings out of 'thumb-pots' yet." How he stared.

"Not out of 'thumbs' yet!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Why, how many dozen shall you have altogether?"

"Time-tried and often-proved old friend as you are," I

replied, taking hold of his honest old hand, "I shall not yet trust you with that secret, though I will go so far as to tell you that I have taken cuttings three or four times off those I first struck, even as far back as September; also cuttings of those cuttings, down to the third generation. I have more than ten times the number of Mrs. Pollocks than ever I had of Christines; and, best of all, the plants came originally from France, where they bore another name, and the one young Smith said was in her Majesty's possession was given by my friend's father to the Queen's gardener. So now you have the whole history."

"If I were to offer you a price for the lot," he said, as he left the greenhouse, "it would only be robbing you, for I should make a little fortune out of them."

Rising and prosperous as I was, I still went over to the Reformatory about once a week, and I had already brought away the little gipsy-boy to work in my greenhouses.

Little Golden Hair.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW I GOT A CHEQUE-BOOK, AND DREW MY FIRST CHEQUE.

At the Royal Horticultural Society's exhibition of spring flowers, "Mrs. Pollock" was seen for the first time by what may be called "all London." It had been forwarded by the Queen's gardener, and was labelled "property of her Majesty." I went to see it. It was a fine healthy plant, and having had no cuttings taken off it, was very bushy and full of foliage. It

made quite a sensation, was the talk of the day; and then duchesses and countesses and ladies of every degree wanted to know where the new zoned beauty, flecked with crimson and bordered with gold, was to be got. As I have before stated, as my greenhouse was almost bursting with the plant, my secret oozed out, and though my name did not transpire, the news soon spread that "Mrs. Pollock" was to be had "at a price."

No one need to be told that when titled ladies make up their minds to have a thing like that possessed by the Queen, and know it is to be had, money is of as little consideration as when they lay it out in the purchase of a choice jewel.

Her Majesty's name had made it fashionable, though I heard afterwards that the royal lady had never set eyes on the plant then exhibited, neither do I believe it would have attracted any more attention than any other new geranium with a variegated leaf, had it not been for the label, and the Queen's gardener presenting Mr. Smith with the plant which his son got so much talked about before giving it to Miss Rose. That plant was dead; and excepting those in the possession of the lady from whose garden I obtained so many cuttings, and who was unknown to the public, the one exhibited, and the two Mr. Rose had struck, I was the sole possessor of the stock of "Mrs. Pollocks," and all the great florists must come to me, and pay my price, before they could execute a single order.

I put all my common bedding plants out of doors and under cold lights, keeping only those in "forty-eight" and "thirty-two pots" in my greenhouse; and as I had done striking, I removed some hundreds of "Mrs. Pollocks" into my striking-pit, where they could not well be seen, as I kept the door locked,

so that I had only about fifty dozen of the fashionable geranium exposed, some of them splendid large plants, others a good saleable size, and a great quantity that in a month or six weeks would double in size, and fetch a high price; for as my stock dwindled down, they would, of course, become scarcer, and rise in value.

The trade at last became clamorous for "Mrs. Pollock," and I left the sale entirely to Mr. Rose, without entering into any explanation. No orders, unless they bore his signature, were attended to, and he made himself answerable for the money for all that were delivered. Many of the great florists drove over and tried hard to bargain with me, but when I told them I acted entirely under his guidance, as he had been my friend from the first and rendered me great assistance, they ceased from troubling me, and got what they wanted from Mr. Rose, to whose residence I sent the greater portion of the finest plants.

I have no doubt that in the trade it was believed he had purchased the whole stock; and as it would not have benefited me in any way to have contradicted the report, I left it to circulate, thankful that it saved me from much bickering. What he charged for the plants I did not know, nor wish to know, until he chose to tell me; but after delivering to him a third van-load, he one day slapped me on the back, and said, "I've got a great heap of money for you, George, lying at my bankers!"

During this busy season my father was ever making pleasant journeys with the donkey and cart, delivering plants to his many old friends who had obtained me such quantities of cuttings, and who in return were delighted with the large scarlet-and-pencilled geraniums, and showy calceolarias and verbenas

which he gave them. Some days he came home laughing, saying "He had been compelled to eat two luncheons, and to dine twice, and that if they kept on stuffing him as they did, he should be compelled to have his waistcoats let out again." One of his old friends, who had given me cuttings, he never named now, which I thought rather strange.

He had worked hard enough for all of us, and nothing made me happier than to think that I was now well able to work for them all, and to supply them with such comforts as they had never before been accustomed to, while my dear father, to use his own words, "was as happy as the days were long."

Though I had no work to do in the hot striking-pit, and very little potting, it took me eight hours a day to water my plants, four in the morning, and the same at night, before I began to make a clearance; for those in the large pots could scarcely have too much moisture, and were dry in almost no time in the hot greenhouse.

So much had I to do that I was forced to employ two boys from the "Reformatory," to take out and put in the bedding-plants I supplied to the families about the neighbourhood, for Mr. Rose had sent many of his private customers to me, from whom I received full price for all I supplied, besides charging for the time of taking them home and bedding them out. Mr. Rose knew that I placed implicit confidence in him, and in everything he did, and though he made no display of his kindness, he threw everything he could in my way.

I still kept up my connection among the costermongers, and to two or three of the best of them I now and then gave a job to take home plants, and do a little watering when I was very busy. When I had to go out on business, my dear mother was the seller, and was a great favourite among the

poor street-hawkers, to whom, I have no doubt, she was rather liberal at times. As for my sister Jane, when I could find her no more employment among my cuttings, she betook herself to "Cloudland" and the young curate, who, as Mr. Rose said of young Smith, was "rather sweet on her." By the end of summer she was able to walk anywhere, and I rich enough to make her a present of a gold watch and chain, for to her I was indebted for much of my success, as I had so many cuttings in the preceding autumn that hundreds of them must have perished before I could have struck them, without her assistance.

Beside "Mrs. Pollock," which was an unheard-of success, and only told in whispers when the fabulous sum I was supposed to have cleared was named, I had been very fortunate with my verbenas, some of my scarlets having trusses of bloom measuring fully two inches across, fairly made the eye ache when the sun shone on their splendid colours. So far nothing had happened to pull me back.

I had been with Miss Rose to hear a Shaksperian reading of Henry the Eighth, by a celebrated lady, and had returned home in a far more serious mood than usual, for the downfall of Cardinal Wolsey somehow seemed to weigh heavily upon me; and after our family had retired to rest, I sat up late absorbed in the great historical drama I had heard read so beautifully.

With my thumb between that page, in the last scene of the third act, and the four last words, Wolsey utters before Cromwell enters, tolling through my brain like a funeral knell, "never to hope again," I sat motionless, my hand drooping as it held the half-closed volume beside the chair, thinking over that heart-broken wail, and how nothing worth living for remained after hope had vanished. "Never to hope again."

Then my mind fell back upon myself: the position I had attained, compared with what I was only three short years before, and of my great success in everything I had undertaken, and how bright a day had dawned after that night which seemed so hopeless, when my father received notice to give up nearly the whole of his garden.

I began to fear I had not, after all, been so grateful for my great success as I ought to have been. I had not "thrown away ambition." I know mine was a poor gardener's commentary on "leaves, blossoms, and killing frost," for had not some of my choicest plants been "nipped at the root?" and yet, though only nineteen, I had made myself a name among florists. I was no longer a poor unknown market-gardener's son; for only the day before I had been with Mr. Rose, and opened an account in my own name at his bankers, and could now unlock my desk and take out my own cheque-book. I had cleared nearly three hundred pounds by "Mrs. Pollock" alone, for scores of single plants had been sold for as much as half-a-guinea each, and none under sixty shillings a dozen.

I opened Shakspere again, feeling that I was becoming too elated—that the fall of Wolsey had failed of producing in me that feeling of the instability of worldly things which I was striving to attain—or I should not have arisen and looked at my new cheque-book, and admired the beautiful lavender-colour in which it was printed.

I opened the book again, and had just read the passage "when he thinks, good easy man, full surely his greatness is a ripening," when I was startled by a loud pattering on the window-panes, which, from the dancing sound, I knew was hail. The evening had been as remarkable for its chilliness

as the day was for its great heat. I laid down the volume, and by the time I reached the door down came that terrible hail-storm, which is still talked about as the heaviest ever known within the memory of living man, though it scarcely extended beyond a couple of miles.

To my ears it sounded as if ten thousand persons had rushed out to throw stones at my greenhouses, for some of the hail-stones that fell were as big as walnuts. It awoke all the family. What with the wind, the hail, and the smashing of glass, the sound was frightful while it lasted, which was scarcely more than ten minutes. There was not a whole row of glass in any of the lights that covered in my greenhouses; some of the squares were broken all the way down, and the shelves and greenhouse floors, on the following morning, were covered with broken glass, while many thousands of panes in the windows about the neighbourhood were broken. And this was the end of summer, and had I not cleared out all my plants, it would pretty well have ruined me, as all would have been broken by the falling glass; so that, heavy as was the misfortune that had overtaken me, I was so far fortunate. And to cheer me up a little, on the following morning my father told me of a Dutchman who, in a fall, had broken his arm, and when his friends came to condole with him, and said "nothing worse could have befallen him," the broken-armed Dutchman said, "What! not if I had broken my neck?" My father was right: heavy as the loss was, it would have been ten times heavier if the storm had come down when my greenhouses were filled with plants, instead of being empty, as they then were.

The hail-storm was the first check I had met with since I started as florist; and the first cheque I drew was to pay for some hundreds of feet of glass to repair my greenhouses, so

that I had good reason ever after for remembering how I drew out the first money ever placed to my account in a bank.

Mr. Rose kindly offered to pay for the damage, but that I could not allow, as he had not charged a single shilling commission on all the hundreds of Mrs. Pollocks he had sold for me—most of them for treble the price I should have obtained had I sold them myself.

Mary Rose was quite angry at the hail-storm for having done me so much injury, and my sister Jane said, "Fie, fie, Mary," when the little maiden wished it had fallen somewhere else.

How my dear mother looked at me when I treated the loss of twenty-five pounds so lightly, which was the damage done by the storm, and told her that I had signed a contract for another greenhouse, which would hold more plants than the two put together I had already built.

An engineer had looked at my boiler, and said it was large enough to supply hot water for ten times the length of piping that I had laid down, and he undertook so to arrange it that it should supply all the three houses, as well as the striking-pit, so that I should only require one fire, and have no further use for the brick flue, which had been so serviceable at my first starting as florist. Mr. Rose had kindly given employment to some of my pupils from the Reformatory, and had entered into another contract with Government for supplying flowers for a new park for the people for seven years, and had agreed to take as many bedding plants of me as would leave me a clear hundred and fifty pounds a-year profit if I could supply them; and this I could not do, and extend my other business at the same time, unless I had another greenhouse, which I resolved

while I was about it should be one hundred feet long by sixteen wide.

The straightforward conduct of my father raised me many excellent customers among the railway directors and their friends, and was the cause of my getting orders to supply the little patches of ornamental ground scattered about the new stations along the line; also a good many flowers in pots; for, as one shrewd old director said to me, "You see we've got a good deal of ground about some of the stations, which we want to let to be built upon; and if people who travel up and down the lines, or come only for pleasure, see a lot of nice healthy flowers about a station, and a lot of land to be let, they begin to think how pleasant it would be to build a house out there, and grow such pretty flowers, and sit at the open windows, smelling the perfume, and watching the trains go by every few minutes, and listening to the songs of the beautiful birds when they could no longer hear the noise of the engine, and all that would help to increase our dividends." And he gave me a nudge in the ribs with his elbow, and winked with one of his sharp grey eyes, which was set in a centre of calculating wrinkles, like diverging lines of railways, which he need only to look at in a glass, and copy, to map out a large extent of country.

Another friend I had long since made, which led to widening my connection of private customers, and throwing me among a much higher class than I had hitherto supplied with flowers, except through Mr. Rose. This was a captain in the Surrey Rifles, and his lady, who recommended me to a large circle of their acquaintance.

They had a daughter, about twelve when I first knew her, their only child, one of the prettiest little golden-haired, blue-

eyed sprites, and one of the most mischievous I had ever met with. She was always shifting the bedding plants I put out in their garden, especially when they began to flower. When asked why she did so, she only answered that "this scarlet one was too close to that, and she wanted a yellow one between and a blue behind, and a stock at the front." Then her father, who was a hot-tempered gentleman, grumbled at me because his plants did not grow like other people's, and I bore the blame patiently and brought others, and never once named the golden-haired pet who had done all the mischief.

It was quite a study to see her holding her mother's skirt, her head pushed forward, her pretty lips apart, and her blue eyes, first turned to her father while complaining, then to me as I replied—a look that said, "Now it's all coming out, and sha'n't I catch it, oh my!" Then to see the smile break over her sweet face when she found I again endured the blame without betraying her, was something to remember.

Sometimes, unseen by her father, she would come up to me with tears in her eyes, and taking hold of my hand, say, "Oh George, it is so good of you not to tell father that I took up the flowers, and I won't do so any more if I can help it, though I do like to move them about so much and see how they look placed different, as I always am doing with the flowers ma buys to put in my hats." I would sooner have lost the captain's custom than betrayed her.

Sometimes the lady herself would thank me for my forbearance, and say, "Lilly doesn't mind my speaking cross to her, for it is only a little cry, a promise to be better in future, and is over in about a minute. But she's afraid of her father, though he spoils her more than I do; while a cross word from

him is not got over for a day or two. But I shall tell the captain all about it one of these days, when he is what I call in the sunshine, for I wish him to be your friend, George, and to make amends for all the blame that has been thrown so undeservedly on your shoulders."

This she had soon found an opportunity of doing; and the handsome manner her husband spoke of me to others, the friendly shake of the hand he gave me as he asked pardon for having charged me with his daughter's faults, and the thought that I had made the little maiden happy, left behind a feeling of much greater satisfaction than I ever should have enjoyed, had I been only anxious to save the reputation of my flowers.

"I must have you in my company, George," said the captain, about this time, "and get you made sergeant, and introduce you to my brother officers and their ladies, who will all buy flowers of you, for you really are deserving of encouragement, and I shall bring my wife and daughter to look at your large new greenhouse."

I may be wrong, though I still believe that I am right, in concluding that an all-seeing Providence shaped my way to success, because I had not striven for it for myself, having no selfish object in view; but only that I might add to the happiness of my parents and sister. My dear mother's smile, and my beloved father's word of praise, gave me a pleasure that no riches could ever purchase; and if I was proud, it was because I had raised my father high above the level of a common market-gardener.

One thing, not done with any intention, perhaps, used to cause me a little annoyance, and bring the hot colour into my face, and that was, when I met some of the poor market-gardeners, who were still striving as hard as ever my dear

father had striven for a living, as they would say, "I suppose you are too big a man now, George, to drink with poor fellows like us, and will be above noticing us at all when you get a bit higher up the ladder."

What reply could I make? Did they expect me, when I came to get cheques for my plants for a larger number of pounds than I used at times to receive pence for my vegetables, to sit down in the tap-room of the market-house with my bread and cheese and pint of porter before me, as I did when ten shillings was quite a large sum to receive in winter? I could not do that now, though I had no more pride in me than when I drove over my donkey-load of vegetables. If I accepted an invitation to go into the coffee-room of an hotel with any of the great florists, it was to take a glass of sherry and a biscuit, and do a little business. While partaking of such gentleman-like refreshment, I could not afterwards sit down among those poor honest fellows as I had formerly done; and if they thought me proud, I could not help it, for I knew I was not.

Secluded and picturesque cottage.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW I JOINED THE RIFLES, AND EXTENDED MY CONNECTION.

As I employed the best workmen, and paid the highest price for their labour, which, as Mr. Rose said, "came cheapest in the end," I lost very little time in looking after them; while they built my large new greenhouse, and made such alterations and additions to the iron pipes, that the whole was heated by

one furnace, and fed from the old boiler. By having the slates in my striking-pit altered, I was able, through placing them a little apart, to put in a peculiar kind of tough short turf, that retained moisture, and diffused it to the roots of my cuttings in the silver sand, thus uniting as it were the soft showers of April with the heat of June; and through this improvement, scarce a cutting went off.

My autumn work was but a repetition of what I had done the previous season, with this exception, that I set about producing three times the quantity of plants that I had potted beforetimes. I had also such quantities of large stock plants, which I had only used for supplying my customers from with "cut flowers" throughout the summer, that they yielded me almost as many cuttings as I required.

The van-load which Mr. Rose had sent me the previous season—having no use for them himself—proved very valuable, especially some of the old-fashioned pencilled geraniums, which were far too beautiful ever to go wholly out of fashion, though very few of them were grown.

I tried a few experiments with grafting, two of which were very successful in producing new forms of colour; one I named "Cloudland," in honour of my sister's work, and the other "Mary Rose." The latter had a very great sale, so beautifully were the pink petals streaked with black and bronze, while the bloom grew very large.

Mary looked quite as pretty as the flower when I introduced her to her namesake, as she blushed and hung down her head very pleased all the time; and I have often thought that no more delicate compliment can be paid to a lady than that of giving some beautiful flower her name.

I had another richly marked with orange, which I called

"Golden Hair," that being as near as I ventured to approach to the captain's pretty daughter, who, when younger, had been such a plague to me and my plants. Both her mother and the maiden were delighted with the compliment; and as the latter took hold of my hand, she raised her sweet blue eyes to my face, and said, "You're a good George, and now I know you have forgiven me for all the mischief I once did you."

I was once introduced to a Miss Grace Greenfield, at our horticultural exhibition, and when I afterwards inquired who she was, was looked at in amazement, and asked if I had never seen the turnip that was named after her? It might have been a compliment, though I thought it a poor comparison when told that the tops were very tender, and it boiled soft. There was some faint resemblance between Mary Rose and the flower I had named after her in its pink petals and her damask cheeks, the dark streaks, and her deep brown hair. True, it led to some little confusion when "Mary Rose" was inquired after, and I answered that she had struck beautifully, and I had potted her in forty-eights, when it was Miss Rose herself they were anxious to know about.

Though I had not got my uniform, I had joined the Surrey Rifles, and attended drill many times before the close of autumn; and whether it was turning about in a confined space among my plants that gave somewhat of a regularity to my movements I know not, but I was pronounced by the drill-sergeant as ready for the ranks long before several of my comrades, who had entered weeks before me.

I was stout and tall for my age, with a chest well developed, and my muscles rendered as tough as whipcord through hard labour, while exposure to the open air and the hot sunny greenhouse had tanned me almost as brown as my gipsy-boy.

Carrying heavy cans of water had given such strength to my arms, that I could throw up my rifle a great height and catch it in one hand when it descended. I had also been entrusted with a pistol when quite a little boy, and shot many a sparrow that was destroying our earliest spring seeds when first they showed through the ground.

As my friend Mr. Rose was an honorary member, and paid a handsome annual subscription, and as the captain always shook hands with me when off duty, I was soon noticed and spoken to by the officers; and when they gave their annual supper and ball, the order was given to me to decorate our head-quarters, towards which Mr. Rose kindly contributed two van-loads of flowers in pots.

I had by that time donned my new uniform, and during the evening had the honour of dancing with "Golden Hair," and was introduced by her mother to several of the ladies, all of whom were familiar with the story of the pretty plague, and the plants, and the blame I bore for her misdeeds, and the flower I had named after the colour of her hair. The kind-hearted captain introduced me to all his friends, many of whom my fame had reached as the grower of "Mrs. Pollock."

Miss Rose had made herself a wreath of the geraniums that bore her name, and was pronounced one of the most attractive young ladies in the ball-room. I thought she was rather too fond of changing her partners, as she stood up to dance with nearly all the young officers who solicited her. I was only her partner in one dance, and could not help thinking that it would not have been so had I worn the uniform of an officer instead of that of a private.

But the ensign of our company introduced his beautiful sister to me, who was own cousin to little "Golden Hair," and one

of the most elegantly dressed young ladies in the room, and I took good care to come rather close to Miss Rose with my pretty partner, so as to let her see that I wasn't quite a wallflower.

When I went to look for her a little later in the evening, I ascertained that she had gone home some time, having complained to her father that she was suffering under a severe headache. I took leave of the ensign's sister, and hurried off to Mr. Rose's house—only to find that Mary, feeling no better, had gone to bed, for which I was very sorry.

It was a trying winter, and many a time did I get up once or twice in the night to see that my fire was alight; for had it once gone out, and my houses got cold during the sharp frost which we frequently had, I should have lost hundreds of my plants. Nor could I get on so well as I had done with my first winter cuttings, as many of them "sloughed" off without putting forth a single leaf after I had potted them. I was also terribly pestered with the green-fly, and had to spend a great deal of money in the purchase of tobacco-rag to get rid of them by smoking my greenhouses. Mr. Rose went carefully over some dozens of my plants, and then said, "You have got the damp in your houses, George, and nothing will get rid of it but fine weather, and letting in fresh air every minute the sun is out. Look how wet the mould is in your pots; they have had too much water for one thing, and that is why they are "fogging" off. Get all the large pots you can, and stick nine or ten cuttings in every one; fill also a lot of shallow pans—they will hold a couple of dozen each. It is the damp that makes your young plants go off."

When the fault was pointed out, I soon saw where I had been in error. I had kept up a great heat during the frosty weather, and also kept my houses covered with matting instead

of stripping that off in the day-time to let in the light: that would have absorbed the moisture, which trickled down, and clung to my plants. Fortunately at the end of February there was a whole week of fine sunny days, which I took advantage of by opening my lights for two or three hours, and getting rid of the damp, but not before I had lost some hundred dozen of my bedding-plants.

I had still hundreds in a forward state enough to yield all the cuttings I should require; and, besides my two boys, I got a young florist to assist me, who thoroughly understood his business; and by the end of March—excepting a few verbenas which we still kept striking—I had got as many pots filled as my three houses would hold.

Had I not recovered myself, I should have lost ninety or a hundred pounds through the damp, which would have made a great difference in the balance at my banker's;—for the new greenhouse, additional iron-piping, and alterations had cost me over a hundred pounds, and I had placed another fifty in the hands of my dear mother, to carry her over the winter, which was more than she had ever had by her before in her life at one time, excepting when she received the cheque from the railway company, to which I had added seventy pounds, making two hundred and fifty, which Mr. Rose had invested for them in something or other he had faith in, though it yielded as much as seven per cent. Though I had said nothing about it, I determined, as soon as possible, to make it up five hundred pounds, to be invested for the sole benefit of my parents.

Although I had nothing very new among my flowers that season, excepting "Cloudland," a beautifully pencilled silver grey, "Mary Rose," and "Golden Hair," which still continued

to be favourites, the latter especially among the ladies of the officers in the Surrey Rifles, still I turned out such loads of bedding-plants, as, by Mr. Rose's management, and through his contracts, paid me quite as well as if I had grown the rarest flowers, and cost me much less trouble. My trade had increased to such an extent that I was compelled to keep a horse and cart, and during the season two men, and two or three boys from the Reformatory besides; for Mr. Rose had thrown nearly the whole of his private connection on my hands, and I had to send and bed out hundreds of plants for gentlemen who had been his customers for years.

Of course I looked sharply after my men, and saw that they did their work properly; and I was sometimes so driven for time to attend drill, that I had now and then to look after my work-people in my rifle uniform, for I was already a sergeant, and I am sure was treated with all the more courtesy for having joined that noble brotherhood, who had armed "for defence, and not defiance." It took up a little of my time, but extended my connection more widely; and I had now others working for me, whose labour was highly profitable.

My dear mother was now home saleswoman, and besides attending to the retail customers, had the sole management of the street-hawkers in her hands, and her sweet temper and pleasant smile carried her safely through all. As for my father, I allowed him to do nothing but just what he liked, and that generally was to take home and bed-out a few plants for somebody he was very intimate with, when he would take his plants and loam, and tools in the donkey-cart, and, were it any distance, very often not return until tea-time, or in the evening; for, as he said, "he could get a bite and a sup from almost anybody anywhere."

That year I supplied Mr. Rose, for his fresh contracts, with some of the finest verbenas ever bedded-out: some single plants making a circle with the shoots nearly a yard in diameter: among these were "Defiance," "Purple King," "Brilliant," "Foxhunter," and "Emma;" yet at one time I was afraid of losing them, so thickly were they covered with the green fly.

Of course he had a great number of men working under him, all receiving good wages, and many of them only going home once a week to their families. Some of these men I had to call on occasionally; one in particular, a foreman, who lived in the most secluded and picturesque cottage I had ever seen. Very often he would ask me as a favour, when I delivered some hundreds of dozens of plants, to stop and see them bedded out properly; and the men attended to my instructions quite as attentively as they did to Mr. Rose, and called me their "young master."

"I find I can't get out as I used to do, George," he said to me one day, as he was about to drive off in his light cart to look after his workmen. "I begin to feel that I want my pipe and jug of ale, and a nap in my old arm-chair oftener than I used. I'm undertaking more than I ought with these Government contracts; more than honestly I am able to see to, and a great deal more than I should get through at all with anything like credit without your assistance; you must go to-day for me. Wait a moment, my lad; here comes Polly with her bonnet on; she doesn't wait to be invited to have a ride with thee this fine sunny morning. Help thee up? Come along then. Oh, what a weight thou art with thy sins!" he said, lifting her, as she took her seat beside me. From that time, Miss Rose very often rode with me.

Large as was the space I had by this time covered with

"Miss Rose very often rode with me." Chap 15, p. 152

glass, it was not sufficient to produce more than a twentieth part of the plants Mr. Rose required to complete his undertaking, so that he had to drive about a good deal before he could find what he wanted. A thousand dozen bedding plants were barely enough for a single bank in some of the large parks he was bringing into cultivation, and which I very often had to see planted properly; for if he sat too long in the sunshine, he was apt to fall asleep, and catch cold, and, as his daughter said, "It was wrong of him to over-fatigue himself, and come home out of sorts, and unable to enjoy his meals, when there was no occasion for it in any way; and it worried dear mother, and made her quite ill."

I was glad to find the young lady was not selfish enough to include herself, for these contracts made her a deal of work, as she had to keep an account of every shilling that was expended, and in the course of a year the outlay amounted to thousands of pounds; and I knew that when she had been holiday-making, she often arose early, and worked two or three hours at her accounts before breakfast, so that she might have everything "in apple-pie order," as she termed it, when her father wanted to know how his affairs stood.

As to my own account, though it amounted to a heavy sum, it consisted of but few items, as, with the exception of a few choice flowers in pots, I charged him but one price for my bedding-plants one with another—so many dozens of calceolarias, ageratums, fuchsias, lobelias, geraniums and petunias, were so many shillings, so that, as Miss Rose said, though her father paid me treble the amount that he paid any other florist, my account was comprised in some such item as "two thousand dozen bedding-plants, at 3*s.* per dozen, £300."

That season, by some means or another, I passed over a few

rare plants, which came among the load of worn-out stock which Mr. Rose had given me, some of the stems of which were wooded, and twice as thick as my thumb; there were six of them alike and un-named, and as they had ceased flowering when I received them, all I could do was to keep them together, not doubting but that I should find somebody or another who would know the name of the flower when it bloomed. But long before they came into flower I had bedded them out by themselves in the new park, where Mr. Rose wanted a clump of fine tall geraniums, such as I could see they would turn out, as they grew very high.

It proved to be "Rollinson's Unique," a splendid dark scarlet, with dark deep coloured markings; and what was of more value than all, a richly perfumed foliage; how the delicious scent came to escape me, I know not.

Some years before it had been a "fashionable" geranium, and, as Mr. Rose said, was as difficult to obtain as my "Mrs. Pollock" was the last season. Even when in flower, very few of the young florists knew it, and I might have brought it out safely as a new plant had I been a little more careful. After such an oversight as that, I determined to go very carefully over the old stock-plants that were un-named, and see what they were like before parting with any more of them, and to watch the cuttings carefully.

Who could tell but that I might find a "Princess Charlotte" amongst them? Mr. Rose did not know the age of many of them, they were so old; and as for the above-named flower, it was only known through a few old water-coloured drawings, and was one of the plants that decorated the cabin of the ship that brought over the Princess Charlotte in 1760, to be married to George III.

That was its first appearance in England; a single bloom measured two inches across, and a truss of four sold in Covent Garden market for a guinea.

So I found myself getting into "Cloudland" through an old geranium that had not been seen for many long years, and the only reason I could give for my fancy roving so widely was, sister Jane reading me a chapter of her imaginative work, descriptive of the flowers the angels brought down from heaven to plant in the garden of Eden.

My fourth season was the most prosperous of all, in spite of the hail-storm and damp in my greenhouses; what with my contract with the railway company for the gardens of the different stations, Mr. Rose's private connection, and the new one I had made through joining the Surrey Rifles, I found that I could safely employ two or three hands the greater part of the year, more especially since I had to look after Mr. Rose's extensive business, which enabled me to find work for several more of the boys I brought from the Reformatory.

But Golden Hair, though now a young lady, always pouted her rosy lips if I did not attend to the captain's garden. It was no use telling her that my men or boys could look after it, and bed out the plants as well as I could. No, that was not what she cared for. "She knew me, and could say anything to me, and her father liked me, and her mother liked me," she said, "and if I liked her as well as I did when she was a little girl, I shouldn't let anybody else come to do the garden, and if I didn't, she didn't care," and she would give her pretty head a toss and go away.

And her mother would say to me when she was gone, "Lilly has an affectionate and a grateful heart, George, and is very fond of you. Do humour her, for she is as much a child

in heart as when you first petted and spoilt her." So the pretty maiden had her own way with us all.

As I had now the means, I thought of covering in the whole rood of ground with greenhouses, but my plans were not approved of by him. "I think you may safely run up a conservatory," said Mr. Rose, "without heating it, just to hold your strong stock-plants, and a few hardy things that you do want; but as for another house, with iron piping and such like, it will make more work than either you or your men will be able to attend to; for to tell you the truth, my lad, I should like you to devote the greater part of your time to the new parks. I can trust you, and I can afford to pay you quite as much as you could get by flower-growing if you covered in the whole rood of ground. Government is so satisfied—thanks to you, George, for looking after things—that they have offered me another contract, and it depends entirely on you whether I take it or not; for I can't get on at all without you. Think over what I propose, and give me an answer this day week."

The long level waste which I overlooked.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW ALL BUT POOR HARRY RECEIVED THEIR JUST WAGES.

Mr. Rose had about twenty men at work in one of the new parks that autumn, levelling the ground here, and raising it there, sometimes in the form of large mounds, which were to be planted with a variety of trees and shrubs, as soon as the soil was prepared to receive them, for if put in at this season they have time enough to root themselves, and once having a

firm hold of the earth, will stand the winter, and be covered with foliage in spring.

I had taken the men's time on Saturday at noon, while eating their dinners, so as to cause no delay in the work, and having cast up the amount, wrote the total down on a slip of paper, which I despatched through Harry, the gipsy-boy I had got from the Reformatory. His mission was to deliver the paper to Miss Rose, and bring back the money in a yellow bag, inside of which was a smaller one for the gold: altogether the amount was over thirty pounds. It was only the work of a few minutes to pay the men, after having jotted down the time, and this was done at four o'clock; so that as their dinner hour lasted from twelve to one, three hours work was done before they were paid, and that was carried over to the next week's wages, unless any of the men were discharged, when they were paid up to the very last hour of working.

Mr. Rose was very punctual, and had always a sufficient sum brought to his house in gold and silver on a Friday night by a messenger from the bank, to pay the men's wages, no matter how many were employed; for, as he used to say, "he could always tell to within five pounds how much money would be wanted to pay all his hands."

Harry had been the same errand several times, and had always returned within two hours; on the present occasion he was much longer, and I became anxious, for, on looking at my watch I found it was just upon half-past three. I went and looked down the road for his return, but there was no sign of him in the long level waste which I overlooked, and I felt confident that neither Miss Rose nor her father had detained *him,* for the florist used to boast "that he never in his life kept

a man waiting ten minutes for his wages after he had earned them."

I jumped into the gig I had driven down in, having kept the horse with a well-filled nose-bag before him, and should have brought sufficient money with me to have paid the men, had I not started so very early that morning, to keep an appointment with a nurseryman a few miles out, who had a large quantity of young trees and shrubs on sale, which Mr. Rose thought would suit him. I took another boy with me, and calling to the time-keeper, said "If I am not back in an hour, bring all the men to the 'Gardener's Arms,' where I will pay them. There is something wrong. Harry has not come back with the money."

"Happen he's stepped it, sir," said the time-keeper; "there's some rummy ones comes out of them Reformatories sometimes."

"He's no more 'stepped it' than you have," said Bill, who had got into the gig, and coloured to the roots of his hair; "and I came from the same place where Harry did, and have been trusted with more money than Mr. Rose would ever trust you with, I know." I did not dislike the boy for sticking up for his gipsy companion, for Bill had also been for the money to pay double the number of men that were now employed; still I checked the boy for speaking in the way he did.

Though the direction in which I drove at a smart pace was not in a line either with the principal entrance or central road of the park, and was in that lonely waste, it was the nearest by nearly a mile to Mr. Rose's house, and was to be one of the side entrances to accommodate the large population who lived far beyond. Part of the road was still in its original condition, a green lane in front, running between hedges, with a good

breadth of grass on each side, and no house within half a mile.

We kept a sharp look out as we hurried along, and Bill was the first to exclaim, "There he is, sir. I know it's Harry; he's been robbed and murdered;" and the boy seemed as if choking while he spoke, then set up a great cry.

Dead he was not, though stunned; his face bruised and bleeding, his clothes torn, and his hands swelled, showing by the knuckles that he had fought hard. The money, of course, was gone. There was water at hand, and he soon revived sufficiently to sit up in the gig, with Bill supporting his head, and off I drove, without stopping a moment, except to call on the surgeon as I passed his door, to tell him to follow me immediately to Mr. Rose's house, and what had happened.

The florist, fortunately, was in, and by the time we had placed the boy comfortably on a sofa, the surgeon, who only lived a few doors off, arrived. All the information I had been able to obtain of Harry was, that he had been robbed and beaten by a big boy and a young man, and that he knew the boy, because he had been in the Reformatory, but was turned out. He wore a cap and a short frock; the young man a red Garibaldi shirt.

With this information I hurried off to the police-station, taking money with me to pay the men's wages, and promising to return the instant I had settled with them. I knew poor Harry would be well attended to by Mrs. Rose and her daughter, and left Bill to glean what information he could from him until I returned.

Mr. Rose hurried me off, saying, "Don't stop anywhere, George, only just to call in at the police-station, and send one of the inspectors here. The men will be impatient for their

wages; and let them have a pint of beer each for waiting, as it will be an hour past the regular time before they are paid."

There were a good many men at the police-station who had just returned from drill, and I was soon overwhelmed with more questions than I was able to answer. "Thirty pounds in sovereigns and half sovereigns, half of each; five pounds in silver—Garibaldi shirt—biggish boy—short smock-frock—had been in the Reformatory—robbery not committed more than two hours ago—Thornaby Lane, leading to the new park."

These words were repeated over and over again, then there was a little whispering among the sergeants and inspectors; and as policemen stood before my horse's head and all round me, I was compelled to exercise my patience, though I explained that the men were waiting for their wages at the "Gardener's Arms."

Though bearing so high-sounding a name, the latter was only a beer-shop, opened by a superannuated old gardener, who had worked for Mr. Rose for years, and who, through his influence, got a beer-licence for a good-sized cottage close by the new park, and did a good business, not only through supplying the work-people, but those also who came to see how the great work was progressing.

"If you could run a couple of our men down as far as Thornaby Lane," said the inspector, "they will know in what direction to steer. I shall despatch two or three others in cabs to give notice at certain quarters, and I think it's very likely we shall lay hold of one, if not both, the robbers soon after dark, for they will hide somewhere until then. I will go on myself and see what can be made of the boy they robbed."

So I took up a sergeant and his brother policeman, though the gig was only made for two, yet, through both "making a knee" for him, as Mr. Rose and I had often done when Mary would go with us, room or not, we managed to run down to the spot where poor Harry was robbed; and, after alighting, they promised to come to me at the beer-shop as speedily as possible.

I was at the "Gardener's Arms" almost as soon as the men, as I suppose they had stopped a little time to make their comments on Harry not returning with the money. In a few words I told them all that had happened. "I saw the two thieves not half an hour ago," said one of the men who had been to take some tools that wanted repairing to a blacksmith, whose smithy was within a couple of miles of the park. His description corresponded with what Harry had given of their dress, and as they were crossing some fields over which there was no proper road, and which he himself had taken for a near-cut, so as to get back in time to receive his wages, I had no doubt in my own mind that he was right; and jaded and excited as I was through all this hurrying, I made up my mind how to act in an instant, for I felt certain as to the direction the thieves would take, knowing the neighbourhood so well as I did.

We had two good horses at work in the park, and as they had not yet been sent to the stables, and as I found the man who had seen the robbers could ride, also another man who had been used to horses, I ordered them to mount and gallop off at once in the direction the thieves had taken, telling them also I should be round with the gig at a spot they well knew as soon as they were, and having ordered beer and bread-and-cheese for the men, and told them they must wait for their

wages until I returned, I hurried back to pick up the two policemen, whom I met coming towards me.

Brief was my explanation; quick the action. The horse, like everything belonging to Mr. Rose, was first-rate, and "making a knee" between us for the sergeant, we went off at full gallop, and in a few minutes came up with our man who gave the information, and who, though he had no saddle, had given the horse a warming.

We were on the right scent. "Not having met the thieves ourselves, neither had they come out from a narrow lane, nor passed near the turnpike, nor been met or seen along the three different roads that all met near the toll-gate, so it was plain enough they were still somewhere in the neighbourhood where they were first seen."

This was what the sergeant said; and when I asked him why he was so certain, he said, "a telegraphic message would be sent to the nearest station the moment we departed, and if the parties had been seen along any of the roads, a mounted patrol would have left a message with the gate-keeper."

While he was speaking, the second man I had mounted came clattering up, without either saddle or bridle, having thrown only a halter over the horse's head, though I could see he was a capital rider. "This way, this way," he shouted; "I've seen 'em. They're in the fields behind here. Jump your horse through that hedge, Jack, so as to head 'em if they try to get out this way. Give the policeman a leg up behind me, and you two drive down this narrow turning with the gig; there's a lane at the bottom, and we shall have pinned 'em inside a square, if the toll-keeper has his eye on the road here."

My calculation was right; they only intended crossing our

main road, whence they would have reached a large common, which led to an out-of-the-way village, far from any high road, where they would have been sure to have stopped for refreshment. Five minutes later, and if they had crossed the highway unseen, they would have escaped, at least for that night, as there was no moon, and the common would have afforded them hundreds of hiding-places, as it abounded in bramble-berry and gorse-bushes.

Within that five minutes, which would have freed them from the net of fields and hedges, they were captured, both together, lying down flat at the bottom of a dry ditch, beneath an old hedge. In getting through it the policeman fell on the top of the boy-thief, in the short smock. They were both pinned in a moment, and the whole of the money was found on the elder prisoner.

We took the prisoners into the toll-gate. The sergeant counted the money, and finding it corresponded exactly with the amount I had stated, and in the same coins, he gave me the bag, and said, "There is no need to produce this, my memorandum will do; and as it is for wages, you had better drive back and pay your men. We shall wait here for some conveyance, and as this is a highway robbery with violence, secure these rascals in a pretty strong box for the night. You will be at the police-court on Monday morning, and find us ready for you by the time the magistrate arrives."

To the police-sergeant it was a matter of common every-day business, and though, for aught I then knew, poor Harry the gipsy-boy might die from the brutal attack made on him, yet the officer made no more bother about it than if the thieves had merely robbed the boy of his pocket-handkerchief.

I reached the "Gardener's Arms" before my cavalry, as I

called the two workmen who had rendered me such good service; and when I told the men we had captured the robbers, and recovered the money, and that I was going to pay their wages with it, they set up such a loud "hurrah" as almost deafened me.

I paid for all the refreshment they had enjoyed themselves over, while kept so long waiting, and giving the two men who had accompanied me a crown each, drove away, leaving them all perfectly satisfied.

Mr. Rose was looking out for me at the door when I pulled up, and I was glad to hear that poor Harry had fallen into a sound sleep, and that he was not injured so seriously as I apprehended.

It was dark, and they had waited tea above two hours for me; and as I was both tired and hungry, having had nothing since six in the morning but a crust of bread-and-cheese and a pint of bitter ale, I made so hearty a meal with the frizzled ham and eggs, that Mrs. Rose was quite delighted, so long fasting hadn't, as she expressed it, "put me clean off my appetite." I just told Mr. Rose that we had succeeded in capturing the thieves, but I did not enter into the particulars until tea was cleared away, when I handed him back the money I had just before received from him to pay the men.

"So the men's wages were paid in the very money poor Harry took for them after all? Well, I'm as pleased as Punch at that," he exclaimed. Then, with a change of countenance that revealed his good heart, he added, "Not that I should have cared a straw if they had gotten clear off with the money, so far as that goes; it's the way they've used yon poor lad that I'll have them punished for, and show them no more mercy than they did him, poor fellow!"

However lenient the wealthy florist might have been if his kind feelings had been worked upon, and the matter had rested in his hands, was never put to the test, as he had not even to appear, the money having been given to poor Harry by his daughter; and for the ends of justice it was better that it was so, as one downright rogue "left his country for his country's good," for the rascal in the Garibaldi shirt was no other than the villanous clerk formerly mentioned, who had embezzled unknown sums while in the service of Mr. Rose. The younger thief, in consideration of his youth, and having made a clean breast of it, was more leniently dealt with, and sent to one of those Reformatories that he would find it much more difficult to escape from than the one he was in when he first met with poor Harry.

It was a cruel robbery; for at the time he was attacked Harry was bringing the younger of the villains to me, to see if I would employ him, believing in his pretended conversion, and quite proud at the thought that he should be instrumental in reclaiming him; nor was it until he reached Thornaby Lane that the boy discovered his mistake, for there the elder scoundrel lay in ambush, having a thorough knowledge of the errand Harry had been sent on.

The poor lad was truthful, and blushed while telling me that he was attacked while letting the boy-thief look at the money, "having," he said, "never seen such a sum in his life."

Harry had fought hard, with hands, feet, and teeth, as was shown by the marks on his assailants, nor was it until he had been knocked down senseless that they succeeded in getting the money from him.

When Mr. Rose heard who the principal thief was, though

sorry from his kind heart at what faithful Harry had suffered, he wished that they had escaped with the money; "for," said he, "it isn't for what the scoundrel himself will have to undergo, for he deserves all he'll get, but it's very hard on his parents, receiving the bitter wages of sins they never committed; very hard, and very wrong, George, somehow or somewhere, though it's beyond my reach to comprehend why it is so very hard that when the guilty is punished the innocent often have to bear the greatest pain, as his parents will have to do, bringing in sorrow their grey hairs to the grave; for they'll find neither peace nor rest any more till they are there. They say a small leak will sink a big ship in time, if it isn't stopped up, and I believe it. I don't suppose when he was at first with me he began by thieving much at a time, but it growed on him, my lads, as the red rot grows on a plant, which, unless it happens to take a turn for the better, is sure to go off and be lost. It's a bad thing to give way to temptation, and a good thing to pray to be delivered from it, because that turns the mind away from the evil, and while you are praying to become better, you are sure not to have any bad thoughts, if you are in earnest, and it's bad thoughts that lead on to bad actions, and good thoughts that drive evil away; for they say the devil is always on the look out for a chance to whisper a word into the ear, to put something bad into the mind, which he knows is as sure to reach the heart as a letter is the bottom of the box, when it's once slipped into the nick. Pray to be delivered from temptation, my lads, when you feel you are going wrong, and you'll soon come right again."

Though delivered in such homely language, I thought it a capital sermon, and so did both Bill and Harry, who were present at the time, and were very grateful that they had been

rescued in the way they had from the clutches of Old Ike, of Lock's Fields.

They were good lads, and soon after this were placed under me as florists, having a great wish to learn the art and mystery of growing flowers.

So things went on for another season without any greater change than that of Mr. Rose extending his sittings in his great arm-chair, and finding less use than ever for his gig-cushions, while I was looked upon by everybody as his managing man. My pay was princely.

Where I often met the pretty milkmaid.

CHAPTER XVII.

I MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS, AND PUT AN END TO A GREAT TROUBLE.

BILL and Harry, the two boys I had taken from the Reformatory, worked, on and off, both for me and Mr. Rose; for, as before stated, I had engaged a young man who thoroughly understood flower-growing, and who took great

pains to instruct them in the art of striking and potting plants, for I intended making them practical florists; while the two others were placed under one of Mr. Rose's head men to be brought up as nurserymen, or growers of shrubs and trees.

I knew that the young man under whom I had placed my two boys could only remain with me a couple of years, as his brother would by that time be going out to Australia to take the management of the large public gardens at Melbourne, and that he must then succeed him here, as their father was very infirm.

Two better or more willing boys than Bill and Harry never struck a cutting in silver-sand, or potted a plant; and I was glad to hear that my father took an interest in them, and was often with them in the greenhouses and cutting-pit while I was away attending to the large works which Mr. Rose had undertaken.

I had now quite enough to do without soiling my hands with any kind of manual labour, for what with disposing of my own plants, going about and purchasing what Mr. Rose required to complete his large contracts, looking after his men, and attending drill as sergeant in the rifle company, for which I kept also a set of books, I never knew what it was to waste a single hour. Then, when I returned at night, I had to read the minutes I had made during the day, and many of these relating to purchases Miss Rose had to enter in her ledgers; for beyond giving general instructions, such as telling me where to go, and what to offer for such things as were needed, the whole of his plans were carried out under my management, and the immense expenditure checked by his daughter, which now amounted to many thousands in the course of the year.

I found, at the commencement of my fourth season, that I

had no need either to look out for a private connection, or extend my business in the trade; for though I had built another greenhouse, after obtaining the reluctant consent of Mr. Rose to do so, I was not able to grow half the bedding plants he required for the public parks and gardens he had contracted for.

True, he wished me to keep the two boys and the young man fully employed, and when he found they could manage without me, I think he was rather glad that I had acted on my own judgment, as I knew as well as he did what would be wanted, and only filled my great greenhouses with such flowers as he must have bought of other florists.

"It's a greater pleasure to me to sign my name to a large cheque for you, George, than it is to hand it over to anybody else; and since the young man and the boys manage so well without you, I am not sorry you are able to double the supply of plants. To be candid with you, my lad, I was a little bit selfish, though I think I said so at the time in a sort of round-about way, fearing if you extended your connection, and devoted more time to your own business, I should have to rouse myself up a little to look after mine, and it would be none the better for it, as Polly well knows. The long and the short of it is, George, while I stand shilly-shallying as to how a thing is to be done, you go and do it at once, and do it well, too. I says to my old woman the other day, I think, wife, it will be a trouble to me soon to drag myself out of my easy-chair and get as far as the Treasury to receive my cheque from the Government twice a year. I wish my lad—but thou needn't blush so, Polly—I'm not going to tell George what I wish before thy face, nor before 'Golden Hair's' either," said he, laughing.

Prosperous as I was in every way, there was something or

another going on at home which I could not understand, for on more than one occasion, when I had opened the door rather unexpectedly, I had found father, mother, and Jane in close consultation on some subject which they evidently did not wish me to become acquainted with, as I saw from the way they looked at one another, and the effort required to turn the conversation into some other channel.

I think, with the exception of my dear mother trying to blind us a little at times as to the state of her funds when she was getting rather low, there never was a family which had fewer secrets to keep, or less to conceal from each other, than ours. If father was in trouble, we made confidants of each other, and did our utmost to comfort him; were it mother, Jane and I took father into our counsel, and matters were soon set right; and I felt hurt that Jane should conceal any secret from me, so open as we had always been with one another.

What was there that I would not cheerfully do for any one of them? Why did they make "an outsider" of me? I was but very little at home, and I was rather glad of it, for I could not endure suspense, but must have spoken out, sooner or later. The explanation came at last.

It was nothing unusual for me to sit up long after the family had retired to rest. I had done so when my time was of no more value than in writing out labels for my plants, but even that time I could then very ill spare during the day. It was very different now; perhaps I had to go off some distance into the country, where I often met the pretty milkmaid, miles away from half-awakened London, while the dew yet lay on the grass and flowers, to attend sales of young trees or shrubs, or to look over some nurseryman's stock, and I must be prepared from my note-book to decide what sorts were wanted, the price,

when and where to be delivered, and all arranged overnight, so that I might set out with a clear head, and be almost able to do the business Mr. Rose had entrusted to me with a "yes" or a "no."

I never could arrange matters in my head to my wish if I staid too late at the great florists, for I must take something or another, and there was so much to talk about, and Mary was such a pretty plague to us all. If we began about business, she would say, "Come, put up the shop-shutters, and let us talk about something else." Then she wanted to go with me if my business carried me to some place she had never seen, and if any objections were raised, why she could find replies to a hundred as readily as one, and we were sure to be beaten.

Pleasant as the company of the family always was—and I should have been ungrateful to have opposed their wishes in any way, after all Mr. Rose had done, and was doing for me—still, when I had important business to transact for him, I liked to have an hour to myself, the last of the night, in my own homely cottage, for there I sat master of my mind, and could gather up the reins of my scattered thoughts, and keep them well in hand. My family knew this, and mother and sister's kiss, and father's warm shake of the hand, with the last "good-night, George," were often given without my rising from my chair, when they saw I was busied in my calculations.

Great nurserymen and florists who had anything to sell now applied to me instead of Mr. Rose, and when I said I would name the matter to him, smiled, as if they quite understood that it entirely rested with me to become the purchaser or not. Even young Smith took off his hat, and made his best bow

for if I was not the Government contractor, who purchased their shrubs and flowers by thousands for the public parks and gardens, I was his representative, as they well knew, and was very often more sought after than Mr. Rose himself; for it was nothing unusual for him to say, "You must talk to George about it, he knows better than I do whether the things will suit or not."

So I had a greatness "thrust upon me," and soon became so used to it, that I moved easily under the weight and responsibility of the burthen.

About this time I was also elected ensign in the rifle company by a large majority; for, though a favourite among my comrades, I heard afterwards that the father of "Golden Hair" took a great interest in my election; and I am sure I blushed like a girl when I first sat down to tea with Mrs. Rose and her daughter in my new uniform, and thought how short a time had elapsed since, in my corduroy trousers and fustian jacket, I wheeled out a dozen or so of plants, with my spade sticking up in the barrow among the loam I took with me to bed them out in properly.

Now I messed with my brother officers, and drove a high trotting horse in plated harness, and often let "Golden Hair" ride beside me, for Mr. Rose considered old Jack was not smart enough for me. I think his kind master thought it was time he had a little more rest, and that was why he spent a hundred and thirty guineas in the horse and gig he now called mine and Mary's, for she insisted on having a share of it, and plenty of excuses she made for me to drive her out, especially if she could catch me in my new uniform.

What a life she led me when I first joined the rifles, having picked up all the words of command. I was officered and

drilled by her to such an extent, that I very often had to run out to escape her.

On one occasion when she came to our house to tea, little expecting I should return so soon as I did, she dressed herself, with the assistance of my sister, in my regimentals. Hearing such loud and continued laughter, I halted a few moments outside the door, and soon found that she was going through the rifle exercise, and giving herself the words of command.

I often thought I should have liked to have had the portrait of Mary Rose, if only for a picture, as she stood half shy, half sly, just as my cap fell off her head, and her long hair came down, before she turned away and hid her face in the folded arms of my dear mother. For two or three days after that she ran away and concealed herself whenever I appeared, and it was only while her father held her fast that I was able to bring her to again.

There was nothing to be ashamed of, although her father was too merry a man to allow such a joke to escape, as her beginning so soon to—well—put on the continuations with a stripe down each side. Though Jane was one of the kindest-hearted creatures in the world, and I believe had a nature as free from envy or jealousy as it is possible for anything mortal to possess, still I often fancied I heard her sigh when my mother showed some strong proof of her affection for Mary Rose; it might be caused by the remembrance of the great trouble she had been to our dear mother during her long affliction—a trouble my mother never felt—in attending to her night and day, except when she saw how much Jane suffered —that sympathetic sorrow which is harder to endure than pain.

What I have here written will show that I was, as stated a little way back, "prosperous in every way," though rather perplexed at this time, by what seemed to me to be a mystery.

The usual kiss and "Good-night" had been exchanged, and I was wrapped up in thoughts of the business of the morrow; thinking, among other things, which would be my best way of getting from this place to that, including the many necessary calls between, when I heard the handle of the door turned very gently, and the soft whisper of my sister saying, "George, I want to speak to you without father or mother hearing." I leant my head back as she kissed me, and said, "What is it, dear—some secret?"

"Well, it is a secret. I have sold my "Cloudland" for fifty pounds, but shall not get the money until it is printed, and I want you to lend me thirty pounds until that time. But you must not ask me what I want it for. That is the secret," she said, blushing like a rose.

"Sit down," I said, "and I will cheerfully write you out a cheque for a hundred pounds if you want it, for I think that would be underpaying you for the many weary days' work you have done for me. You must not allude to paying me back until I ask for the money," I added, as I gave her the cheque. "But there is one thing I should like to know, love, and that is—not your secret, I hope, but something, if I am not wrong, which ought to concern us all. Why am I not acquainted with it? I am sure none of you ever had a trouble but what I did my utmost to alleviate. I need not speak any plainer. It is painful to me to have to say what I have said."

The tears stood in her eyes as she threw her arms round my neck, and said, "Dear George, it was mother's wish that this

trouble should be hidden from you, which it could not have been much longer but for the money you have now lent me."

"You know, my dear sister, how sacred every wish and word of our dear mother is to me," I said. "What is it that this money is wanted for? If it is for something required by either mother or father, why am I not allowed to supply it? Surely I am better able than you to do so, though more willing I believe I cannot be. It is your duty to tell me. No secret that concerned the welfare of either mother or father would I keep from you; neither would I even make a promise to do so."

"I made no promise," Jane answered quickly. "I would not do that; and believe me, George, it was only to save you from annoyance and worry, knowing how many things you had on your mind, as dear mother said, that you were not told. Father and Stevenson became security for Palmer when he took the garden-ground, and now father is called upon to pay it all, for Stevenson says he hasn't a shilling. That's what I want the money for. Now, dear brother, you know all, and I shall sleep the more easily to-night through having told you."

"I long since suspected that things were not what they ought to have been between my dear father and Palmer," I said, "for when I have inquired after him, and asked how he was getting on with his garden, I noticed a kind of troubled expression in father's countenance, and also that he turned our conversation into some other channel instead of answering me. Now, I never liked that man, Jane, and am not the least surprised that he has deceived father. Now, tell me who is applying for the money—then go to bed and close your eyes with the certainty that neither yourself nor father nor mother

will ever hear any more of the matter. It need not have been made a trouble of if I had been spoken to."

My sister again kissed me, left the cheque on my table, and retired to rest, with a pleasant smile on her dear face, having told me all. In looking into the affair, I saw in a moment how my dear father had been entrapped, and how utterly unconscious he was of his own liability, believing that he was only witnessing the agreement of how and when the fifty pounds loan was to be paid back in instalments, instead of signing a joint note, and making himself, along with Stevenson, responsible for the loan; for never in his life had my father given or taken a bill in promise of payment, but was, I believe, as utterly ignorant of the true nature of such a transaction as a child.

I placed the settlement of the affair in the hands of Mr. Rose's solicitor, in strict confidence, and found that the money had been lent for a term of five years, to be paid back in ten half-yearly instalments of five pounds each, all of which seemed fair enough. But the promissory note or agreement was so worded, that in default of a single payment, the lenders could come upon the securities for the whole amount of the loan at any moment. Palmer had paid two instalments, then fallen into arrears, and my father had been served with a writ for forty pounds. This was "the skeleton" in our cottage, which dear Jane was endeavouring to get rid of, by the aid of her own ten pounds and the cheque I signed.

My legal friend got back the promissory note, and there was an end of the matter, and my father never rightly knew what he had signed. One thing I was certain of, he "would never put his hand to paper again;" and though I never afterwards alluded to the affair, I found through my sister that he had

some knowledge of what had transpired, as he once said, "Those cuttings that Palmer gave me were the dearest that George ever had in his life." The gentleman in whose hands I placed this unpleasant business, was the father of my friend Lorrimer, a lieutenant in our company, and own cousin to pretty Golden Hair.

"This is sharp practice," the solicitor said, when he gave me back the promissory note; "they deduct the whole of the five years' interest from the loan, which at once reduces the fifty pounds, they pretend to lend, to thirty-seven pounds ten shillings. If they again lend the money deducted from the principal at five per cent., taking the whole interest from it beforehand in the same way, you will see that in fourteen years the capital first lent is more than doubled. I think I shall turn money lender."

When he had gone, I took out my pencil and reckoned up what the interest for a thousand pounds would be for the term of years the lawyer had named, allowing it to accumulate, and adding five per cent. to every year's additional interest, and I was amazed at the sum I had worked out; as many of my readers will be, if they undertake the same easy task.

I think Stevenson was honest, and would have paid his share had he been able, but I lost nothing through him, for he had given me a little packet of cineraria seed the year before, which turned out very profitable, producing one mass of bloom which had a purple top, while the flower was white with a rich reddish-purple border, beautiful as that of a verbena, and many of the flowers measured above an inch in diameter. A more showy plant was never exhibited, and to add to its value, it possessed a delicious perfume. When first exhibited at the spring flower-show, it attracted quite a crowd, for it was some-

thing new to see a twelve-petalled flower so beautifully marked, and bearing a hundred heads of bloom, as many of the plants did.

I sold them to the trade readily at eighteen shillings a dozen; but they did not do well in the new parks where I placed a few, being too delicate to stand the open air. I was sorry for that, as its fragrance was as delicious as that of the heliotrope, and nearly the same. It won me a prize at the flower-show, and what pleased me quite as much, was seeing the delight of poor Stevenson at my success, for he was an old friend of my father's, and it required a good deal of generalship to get five pounds into his hands, though it was managed at last, for when I offered him a note openly, he put his hands behind his back, and shook his head, saying, "No, no; thou'st lost enough through me and thy father putting faith in a dishonest man."

A nice house in such a sweet spot as this.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW I MADE A PLEASURE OF BUSINESS, AND MET WITH A GREAT SURPRISE.

CLOSELY as I was engaged in business, most of it was to me pleasant labour, though I had a good deal to put up with at times from the men placed under me, who broke loose now and then, and, as it seemed to me, oftenest when work was the most wanted. Some were incorrigible, and those I

was compelled to discharge, for I found that generally such were the ring-leaders, and that through their persuasion the inexperienced were led astray. With the married men I managed best, through taking their wives into my confidence, and making friends of them, telling them how incompetent I was to deal with men double my age, and how it was the duty of their husbands to assist me to the utmost of their power, as I was answerable to Mr. Rose for all that was done, and that it was as much to their interest to strive to please him, as it was mine to do my duty to both. By such gentle management I became a favourite with the men's wives, who continued the work of reformation at home which I strived to forward abroad, and received a warm welcome at their homes when I called; and by great patience and kindness I won the confidence of the men so fully, that in a matter of dispute I could depend upon the majority of the workmen coming to a right decision if I left it entirely in their hands.

I soon had my reward; for the best workmen applied to me for employment, and though the number engaged at times on various works was very great, taking them altogether, a better or steadier class of men could nowhere be found within a hundred miles of the metropolis.

Nor was this all; men who came recommended through me by Mr. Rose, could find employment as nurserymen and gardeners anywhere, and no better certificate of character could be given than "I had him from Mr. Rose, recommended by George Abel."

Some of my work-a-days were looked upon as holidays by Mary Rose, "Golden Hair," my sister, and the young curate, when I went down the railway line to look at the ornamental

A warm welcome at their houses.' Chap. 18, p. 182.

grounds which I had contracted to keep in order. As my "free pass" was open for myself and party, without specifying any particular number, and as I was as well known all along the line as the guards and engine-drivers, no questions were asked, for there was not a director belonging to the company that was not ready to shake hands with me.

My business was to alight at the stations, look about me, and make minutes of what wanted doing, then give my men proper instructions, and send them down the line to do it. That was all.

Fine weather was invariably selected for these pleasant trips, and I have no doubt many consultations took place between Mary Rose, "Golden Hair," and my sister, as to the contents of the basket that was to be opened at our pic-nic, for which some quiet, green, picturesque nook was invariably selected by Jane's poetical eye, all the better if near to a running brook, as she knew it was a pleasure to the young curate to plunge the bottle of choice wine into the torrent to cool, while we sat down and held "high discourse," or was carried away into Cloudland by my sister, or "told sad tales about the death of kings." The young curate was only waiting for what I called "promotion" in the clerical ranks to take Jane away from us to another home.

Out in the open air as I generally was, very often in all weathers, their rural pleasure-parties had a great charm for me, free as they were from the noise of busy workmen, and all the cares and anxieties consequent through over-looking them; and I often longed for a time to come when in some green quiet retreat I could hold closer communion with nature, freed from all the turmoil of business.

Mary Rose had a similar taste, and would cause us to smile,

as she spoke in her simple earnest way: "Oh," she said to me one day, as we stood under a beautiful fruit-tree, beside a moss-grown wall, "I wish I could persuade father to retire from business altogether, and build a nice house in such a sweet spot as this is, where I could sit at the window and hear the voice of this clear brook, and listen to the singing of those pretty birds, and walk out under yonder great trees, and over the fields, and keep a red-and-white cow in that daisied meadow, and have little lambs running and bleating everywhere, and—"

"Grow plenty of mint in the garden to eat with them, and first-class peas," said the curate, laughing. While my sister Jane exclaimed "Oh, fie, Mr. Edwards; I am sure you could never find in your heart to feed on such pretty creatures, when Mary had made pets of them all."

I think Mary was growing weary of book-keeping, for she told my sister in confidence that it occupied her fully ten hours a-day now to post up all her father's accounts, and that she did not like to allude to his employing a clerk after what had happened. I helped her all I could of a night, often taking accounts home with me. All my life I had lived in comparative solitude, for never had there been any other building but our old cottage on the acre of ground that formed my father's garden, as was shown by the primitive gravel we found in every corner of it, at the depth of three feet, excepting in the dried-up pond. Beyond and around us was a busy world of peopled houses, while within our old inclosure—until encroached upon by the railway—all was as quiet and undisturbed, except by outward noises, as when it formed a portion of Daisy-Field Farm.

Birds, bees, and butterflies had been the companions of my

childhood, for wherever a green thing grows they will find a way to it. Goldfinches came to peck at our groundsel, and little wrens stuck up their tails and twittered among the branches, while blue tit-mice played at hide and seek in the privet hedge, and all kinds of strange insects either crossed the walks, or were turned up by my little spade; so that a love of the green country was somehow, so to speak, born with me, and these pleasure-trips along the railway line were real holidays, though still connected with business.

Hard as I worked, I was always thankful that "my lines had fallen in pleasant places," for I think a sedentary life would have made me very unhappy, though I should have done my duty in any station that had been allotted to me. I never dug my father's garden without thinking of the countless millions who had just done as I was then doing, and who now slept peaceably within the bosom of the Mother Earth from which they had drawn their sustenance, all their labour having ended in preparing themselves for the graves that were ever ready to receive them.

Such thoughts as these led me to higher aims,—to the consideration that there was something more worthy to live for than that of obtaining food, raiment, and riches, and that while here we but grope about in the dawn of an uncertain light, that can only burst into glorious and never-ending day beyond the grave.

My sister's "Cloudland" was a fanciful state of probation in which those who first commenced working in the garden of heaven began on the low borders of the grey morning clouds, and ended by reaching such as at sunset "hung golden all about the sky."

Mary Rose, in her way, too, was "a dreamer of dreams,"

and thought it a great waste of life to be ever striving after wealth, and neglecting the more valuable riches of pure intellectual enjoyment; and her father would laugh good-naturedly, and say, "Ah, Polly, if I'd been struck with a fit of the 'poetics,' I should never have been able to have got such a 'plum' for thee as I have."

On one occasion the shrewd old director, who used to wink his cunning grey eyes, that were surrounded with wrinkles, diverging all ways, like railway lines from some great central station, joined our pic-nic party, after adding to our stock of comforts a couple of bottles of rare old sherry, and one of champagne, bearing the golden brand, which he said was for the ladies to join in at the finish. He was what, in party-giving parlance, is called "a great accession," and made us very merry, telling us no end of anecdotes; and one in particular, connected with his building speculation, to forward which it will be remembered was his chief object in employing me to plant flowers around the different railway stations. "Golden Hair" was delighted with him.

"I was one day," he said, "standing behind the embankment which is to form the road to our new village of villas, which, by the way, is to be called Honeysuckle Homestead—quite a poetical name, and one of my own inventing, don't you see?" and he gave me a dig in the ribs with his elbow; while, in answer to Mary Rose's question, "Were there many woodbines about the neighbourhood that caused him so to name it?" he said, "I believe not, but we intend giving George an order for a cart-load to plant out everywhere; so you see, my dear, it will correspond with the name, if they happen to live. Well, as I was saying, I was concealed by the embankment, and compelled to be a listener to a gentleman—nearly as old as

myself, I should think, and I am over threescore—and a pretty young lady, who might have been his granddaughter, so far as the difference in age went, but who I found was about to become his wife. Their object was to buy a portion of land, and build a house; their conversation was on rural felicity. I don't think the young lady had gathered much knowledge about either agriculture or the management of cattle, or anything else in connection with a country life.

"'Oh, it will be so nice,' said she, 'to keep a pretty cow, and then I can get up—when I have learnt to milk—every morning and milk it; and when I put it in the churn, you can be churning the butter while I drive the hens into the kitchen and make them lay their eggs, so that we may have them new-laid, and as fresh as the butter. Then, just before breakfast is ready, my dear, I can run out and stir up the skylarks in the fields, so that they may keep on singing all the time we are enjoying the eggs just laid, and the butter newly churned. Then I can do a little washing, and dry the things on the black-currant bushes, and they will smell so delicious—you don't know how sweet, dear.'

"'Nay, hang it, we won't have any washing done at home,' said the venerable lover. 'That's rather too low. The laundress must come and fetch the linen away in a cart.'

"'Well, my dear, we won't have our washing done at home, if you disapprove of it,' said the young lady, 'but will have a nice clean white sow and a lot of little pigs. Oh, I'm so fond of sucking-pig, and will grow apples for sauce, and great beds of sage and onions to stuff them with; and you shall sit down and turn the spit, dear, and roast them nice and brown. That will be delicious.'

"'I don't like onions,' said the sage lover—'always give me

the bile—never agree with me. A boiled fowl and a bit of pickled pork, with nice melted butter and parsley, is more in my way.'

"'Then I won't stuff the little darlings with sage and onions, but with veal stuffing,' said the lady; 'and you shall kill the old sow when she's done laying pigs, and the hens when they've done laying eggs, and I'll put her in pickle, dear, so that you may have pork to your fowls. And we'll have a great pond dug, and you must contract with the water company to fill it fresh every morning for the ducks and geese to swim in, and buy a boat to row me about and see the sweet pretty creatures on the water.'

"'I'm afraid that would come a good deal dearer than if we bought our ducks and geese as we wanted them,' said he; 'and as the nearest water-main is about ten miles off, I don't think a thousand pounds would go very far towards bringing a supply of water here to fill your pond every morning. No, my dear, that's too expensive; but I'll have a nice deep ditch—about a yard wide—dug for your ducks and geese to swim in when it rains, for that will serve as a drain to the house as well. Ducks are dirty things, my love, and fond of nasty drains.'

"'And yet,' said she, looking up at him, 'you often call me your little duck. I take your last remark, sir, as personal, and don't want any more of your attention; for as I've got my return-ticket, I can find my way to the train and reach home without you.'

"And the little lady tossed up her head," continued the director, "exclaiming 'a dirty thing, and fond of nasty drains, am I?' and off she shot like one of our express trains, without waiting to give her venerable lover time to explain; and as he was rather shaky on his pins, and couldn't get on at all without

using his stick, she must have reached the station before he had travelled a fourth of the distance, and got there in time for the train which I heard stop. I followed the antique Adonis, and saw him seat himself on the platform, looking very disconsolate, while waiting for the next train. I'm afraid that unfortunate allusion to the ducks has lost us a good customer, for the old gentleman had fixed his eye on a two-acre piece."

The young curate looked slyly at Mary Rose when the director came to the end of his story, and said, "What do you think of fresh butter made out of milk warm from the pail?"

"I think it would be quite as good as your dull joke," she answered, "which would have been all the better if it had stood until there was a cream on it."

While walking to the station, the director startled me by saying, "Our solicitor is not at all satisfied with the title he has received to the freehold of your father's garden, George. In short, he says it is no title at all, and has advised us to delay building a traffic-station on it, as we decided doing, until the company has a surer claim to the ground. Do you know anything about how it was held originally?"

"We have some old documents in a box," I answered; "renewals of leases, I believe, from time to time. Your solicitor can have them to look over. We have also receipts showing that during the latter part of his life my grandfather became an annual tenant, paying the same as my father always paid until you became our landlords, which was ten pounds a-year. I hope it is nothing that will affect the compensation you so generously made to my father."

"No, it has nothing to do with that," said the gentleman; "on that point we are perfectly satisfied. We want to see the

original lease, which, being granted some hundred years or more ago, would be made out in the name of your great-grandfather. Have you such a document among your old papers?"

"Yes, we have the original lease granted to my great-grandfather," I said; "the land was a portion of Daisy-Field Farm. I think it is called meadow-land, and he was the first who converted it into garden-ground. I have looked over the document several times, but never could clearly understand it. There is something about a release I never could master."

"That's it, George; that's just it," said the director; "and the gentleman who sold us the land had no more right to the title than the porter now carrying our empty hamper. Our solicitor says that the papers he has given in are no claim at all, not going back beyond seventy years, and giving no account as to how the property first came into his family. However, the money is not yet paid, and I am glad of it, as it might have led to an expensive lawsuit. I have every reason for believing that the acre of ground is your father's freehold. I hope it may prove so; if it does, he will be a thousand pounds richer than he is at present, for that is the amount we have agreed to pay for it. A lease and a release are very different things."

"Oh, George, I hope it will prove to be yours," said Mary Rose, who had been walking beside me, and heard the whole of our conversation. My father always said all the other portions of the Daisy-Field estate were freehold, and it was very strange to him that yours should be held by a different tenure." I thought so too, and resolved to look out the document at once.

A peaceful old-fashioned village.

CHAPTER XIX.

"GOLDEN HAIR."

My evenings at home were too much occupied with matters connected with my own and Mr. Rose's business to allow me time to look over the old documents, which were kept in a small oak chest, ornamented with a simple scroll, showing that the box-makers of those days did not consider it beneath their attention to make even so plain an article as a chest as pleasing as they could to the eye. As the box of itself was a curiosity, I corded it up with all it contained, which I knew

were receipts going as far back as the time of my grandfather, with the original documents, up to the earliest period the acre of land had been in possession of our family, but not one of my father's, as these were kept in the old chest of drawers. I tied the curious old key to the cord, and despatched it by Harry to the solicitor of the railway company, whom I knew well, as before stated, and along with it I forwarded a note, slightly alluding to what had transpired between myself and my friend the director, for such I may truly call him, as it was through his intercession I obtained the planting out of the gardens and ornamental grounds at the various railway stations down the line.

This done, I tried to dismiss the whole affair from my mind, for it is a sad waste of time to sit brooding over a hope that may never be realised, and that "will come when it will come," and not an hour before, but only make the hours longer and more wearisome if we sit down to watch its fulfilment; so I attended to my business, and thought very little of the claim we might have to my father's garden.

About this time the young florist—who, along with my father, had managed my business, and looked well after Bill and Harry, while my time was devoted to the more important affairs of Mr. Rose—was compelled to leave me, and take the place of his brother, who had gone out as head gardener to Australia. This was a great inconvenience, as I had as much faith in him as my friend Mr. Rose had in me, and never for a moment had I cause to regret the trust I had placed in him, for he had done his duty to the two boys, who would soon be young men, and who could strike and pot the cuttings and *attend* to the greenhouse as well as I could.

They were always under the eye of my father or mother, for I had long ago turned the old shed in which I found so much useful lumber when I first commenced flower-grower, into two neat sleeping apartments, at very little cost, and of an evening the boys had the large, clean, roomy kitchen to themselves, if they preferred it better than remaining with the family.

Through this arrangement the lads were always ready to attend to the fires at all hours, and as they received nothing but kindness from our hands, and lived just the same as we did, they in return made their service "a labour of love," and found a pleasure in striving their best to please us all.

Both my dear sister and the young curate took a deep interest in them, and they became fond of reading, and I need hardly add were well supplied with books, for I had now quite a little library.

I still attended punctually to my regimental duties, and my rank as ensign caused me to have frequent communication with my old friend the Captain, whose beautiful little Golden Hair was now one of the handsomest young ladies, as my dear mother said, "that ever stepped in shoe-leather." She had already turned the heads of half of our young officers, nor did she ever lose her old liking for myself.

As I never in my life shirked work, though I knew too many who did, I somehow found myself entangled among the accounts of our company, so much so at last, that if anything was required as to our outgoings or incomings, I had to be referred to quite as much as in matters connected with Mr. Rose; in fact, the whole expenditure of our company passed through the hands of myself and the Captain. But here, again, Golden Hair stepped in and did for the Captain what Mary

Rose did for her father, for she was quite as quick at figures, and was now turned fifteen.

There was not that wide severance between us now which there was when I first wheeled my bedding plants and loam into her father's garden, a boy of sixteen, and she a girl under thirteen, romping and playing about me, and trampling on the ground I had just dug; for if she was a lady by birth, I was now an ensign in the Rifle Volunteers, and had, through my own good conduct, risen to be the companion of gentlemen, and so to rank with them. Still Golden Hair, though now pretty well as old as I was when I first made her acquaintance, retained much of her girlish playfulness, and would never either treat me as she did other chance visitors, nor use that maidenly reserve towards me which a young lady going of sixteen generally shows to a young man going of twenty. I was "George," as she had always called me, and she was greatly displeased if I ever called her anything but Lily or Golden Hair; the last name she liked best.

Now Lily the young lady, with her pretty hat and feathers, the golden ringlets showering over her neck and shoulders, her tight-fitting jacket, full skirt, and boots with military heels, was a very different companion from Lily in her pinafore, pelting me with garden mould, then giving a scream, running away and shouting, "You can't catch me"—and I soon found it so.

A very pretty greatly-petted young lady, who has budded into maidenhood out of a spoilt child, is a most difficult subject to handle. You cannot be angry with her, for that is unmanly, neither can you be very firm, or very serious, while she laughs at you, dances round you, or sings "at" you. She has taken a liking to you, and you must suffer for her fancy, and if you speak sharp to her, why—she bursts into tears, and he must be

a man of hard heart who can look unmoved upon a sweet young face saddened by sorrow, which he is the cause of.

I know her liking for me caused me to be envied by all the young officers in our regiment, and they would have parted with some of their teeth for the pleasure of sitting beside her and driving her out, as I often had to do most unwillingly.

What could I do? If, while I called on my captain on regimental business, and his servant held my horse for a few minutes, Golden Hair darted out of the room, put on her pretty hat and coquettish jacket, and seated herself in my gig, laughing at us both, as she sat there, when her father came to the door with me?

I couldn't speak to her as a policeman does to a person who is doing something that is not right, and say, "Get out of that, will you?" nor did it matter to her where I was going, "all roads were alike, and she could come back herself in some omnibus or another, she wanted a drive, and would go with me, and I must take her."

Then she was such a pleasant companion, and nothing pleased her better when I went out to buy plants for Mr. Rose, than to dine with me on the homely fare we found at the public house of some peaceful old-fashioned village, where the forks had only two prongs, and we had to knock on the table with the handles of our knives when we wanted anything.

Then the Captain was such a kind-hearted gentleman, and had done so much to serve me in every way, and was so fond of his beautiful daughter, and her mother would have shed her heart's blood for her happiness, that I could not refuse to do anything which brought a smile to their faces, and a cheerfulness to their affectionate hearts, for she was the sunshine of their lives.

All day long she was flying up and down the house, and singing like a bird, so that when you didn't see her, you heard her sweet voice, and a pleasant voice it was to hear. As a bird flaps its wings before soaring, so would she run about the great garden at times waving her beautiful arms up and down, as she exclaimed, "Oh, I should so like to fly!"

She seemed always to be so full of happiness that she could never rest, unless imparting it to those about her, for by some sudden impulse she would fly to her mother, throw her arms around her neck, and hang there so long kissing her that the good-natured lady, as soon as she could draw her breath, was forced to cry out, "God bless you, child, you'll smother me," kissing her darling in return, and looking at her with those loving eyes, which only the passing shadow of a fear that any harm might ever befall her dear Golden Hair would fill with tears.

As to checking or stopping her, it would have been as cruel as placing your hand on a beautiful bird while shaking out of its over-brimming heart great gushes of unceasing music; you must have frightened it before you could have stopped its sweet song.

Then her attitude while dancing and humming her own music, her arms raised, her head aside, the golden ringlets streaming out and falling up and down, as if beating time to her nimble feet; you would have valued that photograph, for it would have made you happy only to have looked at it when you felt sad; and yet it could never have been taken, for before you could have said, "Oh, how beautiful!" another picture would fill the eye, ever shifting from scene to scene, and the last seeming to be the loveliest of all.

I could understand the Captain when he said, "On the chil-

liest day in winter I never seem to feel cold when she is with me, for there is a warmth in her very presence." It was that happy bounding life which diffused itself, like laughter that cannot be controlled.

She was restless at times as the pretty white throat, that will sing, and soar, and descend, and touch the same spray a hundred times together without once alighting on it, and I have seen her, within the space of a minute or so, run her fingers over the piano, sing a few notes, run up and embrace her mother, take up her little spaniel and hug it, then put it down, and begin dancing. Her father would sometimes laugh, and say that "he believed, instead of young racing blood, her veins were filled with quicksilver."

Yet, in spite of this natural playfulness, she had a will, and could keep a strict command over herself when it was needed, for Mary Rose never sat down more staidly to make plain her father's intricate and extensive accounts than Golden Hair did before the regimental books which had to be audited by the Captain. It is true that the entries were made by myself, run on in the same regular order as the letters of the alphabet, so that her task was never a long one, and it was amusing to watch her, when it was finished, dart out into the garden, and run up and down waving her arms, as if to make sure that they were once more free.

How different her life to that of Mary Rose, who had sometimes to make entries in a dozen or more ledgers in the course of a day, and to sit close at her father's accounts for eight or ten hours, though I helped her all I could, and often took home with me a large bundle of invoices, along with the ledger in which they had to be entered, or sometimes made out a long list of accounts, the bills of which had not been delivered.

This I often did, when on the following day I had to go some distant journey, on which she had gained permission to accompany me, though my clerkship frequently occupied me until past midnight.

I hated deceit of any kind, and as for a falsehood, I almost detested the utterer of it; nor could I ever reconcile myself to those "white lies" which some say it is necessary to take shelter under to spare the feelings of others.

I liked my Captain and his lady as much as I did Mr. and Mrs. Rose, and as for Golden Hair, I should have liked her for another sister; but I could not always take her out when I went my journeys, especially when Mary Rose wished to accompany me, for she was the daughter of my employer, who now paid me a gentleman's salary, such as few officers or clergymen receive, unless they have attained high rank, or are installed in good livings, and it was my duty to do all that he desired of me.

What could I say, what could I do, when of an evening sometimes I called on my Captain, or met him at our headquarters, where Golden Hair was sure to be with him—what could I say, but speak the truth in answer to her inquiry of "Where are you going to-morrow, George? May I go with you? What time shall I get ready?"

I talked the subject over with my sister Jane, and asked her advice as to how I could best manage without giving offence to the Captain or Mr. Rose.

"One thing's certain, George," she said, "the two young ladies don't like going out together with you, showing they are believers in the old adage which says, 'Two are company, but three are not,' which, I suppose, means that a third is one too many to make the company pleasant. I like them all. Lily is a dear little chatterbox, a spoilt darling, and we are all proud

to see you held in such high estimation as you are, both by the young lady and her parents. Her mother told me that when she was a girl, and all the servants were making continual complaints to the Captain of her giddy, thoughtless, and mischievous habits, you was the first to shield her faults, talk to her kindly, and take all the blame upon yourself. Then you called a flower 'Golden Hair,' after her pet name, and——"

"So I did another after Mary Rose," I said.

"That's just it," replied my sister; "and you first drive one out, and then the other. And don't you rememher how jealous we were of each other when little children, if any distinction was made between us, you calling yourself 'mother's boy,' creeping close to her, while I was 'father's girl,' and did the same, and how next day perhaps we changed, and had still the same little spite against each other if not noticed alike? Lily is still what we were then; Mary Rose what we are now. Golden Hair has gone on liking you; it has grown with her growth, and never having had so much either to occupy her mind or time as Mary, and having had her own way pretty well in everything and with everybody, she can't well be made to understand why she can't have it with you, especially as there are so many young gentlemen ready to become her slaves, even to her 'shoe-tie.' Have you ever paid any particular attention to her, George, so as to cause her to think that—that —you have more regard for her than you have for any other young lady of your acquaintance?" and my sister looked down and blushed as she asked the question.

"You mean, in plain English, have I ever made love to her, Jane," I said, hitting the nail on the head at once. "Never, as I am a lover of trnth, either by word or look. I should just as soon think of making love to Mary Rose!"

Without raising her eyes, or shifting her position, or showing in any way with what reluctance she proceeded to question me, excepting in the change of voice, she said, "Has Lily, in her thoughtless way, ever said anything to lead you to suppose that she thinks more about you than any other young person she knows?"

"Once she rather startled me," I said, "though I think I may safely say that the words never recurred three times to my memory since they were spoken until now. It was something her gossiping maid Emma had overheard, no doubt through purposely listening, about my friend Lieutenant Lorrimer having proposed for her and been dismissed, with the plea that she was much too young, and would not be open to any offer, however eligible, until she was twenty; and she said, "If 'pa' and 'ma' had consented, I would sooner have run away and got a situation as governess where nobody could have found me, than I would have had him."

"That was not all she said, George," were the next words my sister uttered, while she looked me full in the face. "You have no need to blush, brother, for I am sure you did nothing to be ashamed of. Tell me the rest."

"Well, I will tell you," I said. "I spoke of how wrong it was for her to listen to what her maid, who was an eavesdropper, had told her, when she burst into tears, and said, 'Will you wait until I am twenty, then let me be your dear little wife, George?' You were near us in the wood at the time."

"God of heaven help her!" said my sister, rising and leaving the room, while I stood still in speechless amazement.

"She was riding, and I was walking beside her." Chap. 20, p. 201.

Wretched tumble-down shed.

CHAPTER XX.

CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSE ME TO CROSS-EXAMINE MYSELF.

I WILL not say that I did not thoroughly understand my sister, though it was some minutes before the full meaning of her hints and words rose clearly before me; and, after all, I looked on what she had said from my own point of view. Lily was but a child when I first knew her, and told me all her little secrets and troubles as she would have made them known to a brother, had she had one. She was riding, and I was walking

beside her, when she uttered the words, the repetition of which had so greatly alarmed my sister, though they made but one impression on me for the moment, which was, that she was hurt at my rebuking her for listening to the tattle of her maid, and, in her impulsive way, wished me to be her friend, as she had no one she placed so much confidence in as myself.

As for calling herself my little wife, she had done that hundreds of times; but never before with a full heart and brimming eyes; and often had her father, in his joking way, said, "Stop, my dear, until George receives his commission as captain."

I liked her, as everybody did who knew her, but as for thinking of her, or speaking to her, or treating her, as a boy does his girl sweetheart, such thoughts and feelings were as remote in my attachment to her as in my liking for my sister Jane; and I am sure both her father and mother knew it.

Were I to say that I felt the same towards Mary Rose, scores of things that had happened would have arisen in my remembrance and contradicted me: my dislike for Charley Smith, when he gave her the fancy geranium—my feeling miserable when she danced with the young officers at our Volunteer ball, and on many other occasions; and what boy, similarly circumstanced, has not felt the same when he has fancied that his girl-partner has neglected him and shown a preference for another, and would have liked nothing better than to "have had it out" with his rival there and then;—and when she has come up to him smiling, and put out her dear little hand, unconscious of having done anything to give offence, turned away, or told her to "go to Jack Smith," like a brute as he was?

I think it was when I was about fourteen, and we were very

poor—for the garden was bringing us in but little—that I thought the most of what I should do if, like father, I had mother to support, and Jane, and [myself, and was a father as he was. And such thoughts used to frighten me, as it never entered into my calculation that I must become a man before I could undertake such responsibilities. But instead of that, I pictured myself with a girl-wife and a little family, and I no older than I then was, and unable to earn more than from eight to ten shillings a week, and only the larger sum when the days were longest, and very often nothing at all for weeks together in winter. And I used to dig away and wonder to myself whatever we should do when we had no money in winter, neither coal nor candle, nor anything to eat; and whether, if I went to the workhouse, they would take us in, and put me in a drab dress, with great white metal buttons on the coat, and my girl-wife in a striped gown and a cap without a border, and send me out with some other pauper to carry a stretcher, with a tilt over it, and bring in poor ailing people to the workhouse, out of some wretched tumble-down shed, in which they were not permitted to remain until they died.

I know that was rather a gloomy prospect of marriage, but what brighter or better could be looked for, when the husband and father was but fourteen, and during frosty weather couldn't earn a penny?

After this my mind and time were too fully occupied to admit of such speculations, and I was but sixteen when I found my father almost as much disheartened at the loss of the greater portion of his garden as I had been at the thought of becoming a boy-husband: and then I had to buckle to, for my mother and Jane, and even my father, looked up to me, young as I was, and I did that for them which I so much "feared in

apprehension" I should never be able to do for others, so that I had the care of a family thrown on my shoulders while but a boy.

My affections were too much engaged in those it was my duty to love and labour for, and take care of, to think more of Golden Hair than what a little plague she was at times, and to wish I could make my mother and sister as comfortable as Mrs. Rose and Mary.

I was sure Mary Rose liked me, and so did I her; but if she had exerted herself to serve me, I had spared her every hour's labour that I could possibly take off her hands, and done my duty to her father often when I might have turned my time to greater profit had I attended more to my own flowers; yet the latter thought never passed through my mind without my conscience accusing me of ingratitude.

Mary Rose was my employer's daughter, and I paid more homage to her on that account than I otherwise should have done, for she had dealt very plainly with me at times, especially when I was struggling up-hill with all my might, and was afraid to get into debt lest it should add to the burthen I was dragging after me. Still she had always been exceedingly kind to me, and though I talked to her just as I did to my sister, I never forgot my position, but always remembered that in some measure I was her father's servant, even while he behaved to me more like a father than a master.

True enough he had joked me many a time about his daughter, for he was a merry man, and as full of spirits as a happy boy; and Mary had blushed and I had felt confused, but never in my life had I breathed a word of love in her ear, and I feel certain that if I had said to her what Golden Hair had said to me, in her flower-covered counting-house, she would

have been offended, and, perhaps, have thrown her father's great leaden inkstand at my head, which would have been no joke, I can tell you.

I have stated that I was, at our rifle ball, introduced by a young ensign to his sister, and that they were Golden Hair's cousins. It was through his promotion to a sub-lieutenancy that I obtained my ensigncy. He was now lieutenant, and we were still the best of friends. It was a few days after he had been rejected courteously by the Captain and his lady—on account of her youth—when he made an offer of marriage to Lily, that he came up just as I was about to start in my gig from Mr. Rose's door, and said, "I should like to have a little conversation with you, George, and as I have nothing on hand very particular this morning, and know how full of business you always are, I'll ride round with you if you've no objection."

I had no objection, and thanked him for being so considerate, and thought perhaps he might have something to say to me respecting the documents I had forwarded in the small oak chest to his father the solicitor. But on this point I soon found that the lawyer kept his own counsel, as not a word was said on the subject.

We had not driven far before he came to the point, and said, "What have you been doing, George, to cause my pretty cousin to fall head-over-ears in love with you? Last night there was quite a scene, the Captain tells me; and she made a clean breast of it; said she loved you, and if she hadn't you she would clip off her golden locks, and go into a nunnery or somewhere or another. You know I proposed for her?"

"I have heard so," I replied, without betraying Lily's secret. "And I know you will believe me when I assure you that such a thought as making love to your little cousin never once

entered my head; that anything approaching a tender word, beyond that of kindness and respect, never escaped my lips; and that though she has kissed me hundreds of times since I first knew her when a girl, I never even went so far as to touch her forehead unless she came to me, held up her sweet face, and said, 'You're not going like that?' She has not done so lately."

"It is just as I believed it to be," said my friend; "only she has taken a greater liking to you than any of the rest of us. I stand well with the Captain and his wife, as you know; and their only objection is in the words of the old song, 'She's ower young to marry yet.' Still, as her father said to me last night, 'If the love is mutual, as you have got her heart, you shall have her hand.' And were it so, I should make my bow, and retire from the field; though I love Lily very dearly, yet, for all that, I would not for a moment stand in the way of her happiness."

"The Captain is a noble-minded gentleman," I said, with considerable emotion; "and much as he has honoured me, this is the greatest honour of all, unfitted as I am in every way to become the husband of his daughter. She is better adapted to become your wife than she is mine; for, so to speak, you are a born officer, while I have only risen from the ranks. My rough, hard work-a-day habits would but ill accord with her gentle life. She would begin to pout if anything like business came in the way of her pleasures. I have already yielded in this a little too much, though it was often done to gratify our worthy Captain. I love pretty Golden Hair as much as if she were a dear little sister; but other love for her I have none; so please break this to her father and mother as pleasantly as you can, and leave me to reason with Lily."

Much more was said on both sides, but I have only confined myself to what related to the little lady, and the position I occupied. We shook hands kindly, and I parted from him near a railway station, leaving him to make his own statement to the Captain, and promising to aid his suit to the very utmost of my power.

After the Lieutenant left me I had a long drive over an almost solitary road for some seven or eight miles, as my business was to look at some young forest trees that were wanted for a gentleman's estate, who had commissioned Mr. Rose to give as park-like an appearance as he could to some hundred acres of land. As I drove along I put myself under some such mental cross-examination as the following :—" Was I sorry or glad to be beloved by one so beautiful and accomplished as Golden Hair?" " Was it true that I had no more liking for her than I had for some three or four other young ladies, whom I had met at the houses of our various officers?" " Did I like her as well as I did Mary Rose?"

A bullock flying before two men and a dog rushed out of an open gate at that moment, startling my horse, who, dashing to the far side of the road, got into a ditch and overturned the gig, dropping me very gently upon a broad, close-cut hedge, without any further harm than that caused by a few sharp thorns.

So was my cross-examination abruptly terminated, and left unanswered. Neither horse nor gig was injured, for it was a dry ditch into which they had fallen, with a good sweep of grass before it, coming out from the high road quite broad enough to form such another common-way; so with a little help from the drover and the grazier, and the barking of the dog, I was soon again on my way, and able to repay the

service they had rendered me by overtaking and driving back the bullock, which had gone in a contrary direction to that desired by its drivers.

That upset had jolted my thoughts into a lower and more becoming channel. What presumption in me to dare to give a preference to either, when I looked back to the point I started from less than five years ago.

Could I forget the snubbing I got from the rich salesmen when I went timidly into Covent Garden with my basket of early lettuces, the first we had gathered that spring, and for which I asked a shilling a dozen? Had I forgotten how I used to drive my donkey and cart over and round by Parliament Street, to save the toll of Waterloo Bridge, and was not above selling a cabbage or two, or a bunch of onions or radishes, if stopped by a chance customer while on my way to market?

As I drove along I felt half disposed to strike myself with the butt end of my whip, to make sure that I was not dreaming, was not the same boy who had done the "meanest chares," and who now refused the hand of a Captain's daughter, a lady by birth, and rich enough to keep her carriage and a goodly array of "liveried menials."

I took off one of my driving-gloves, and looked at my great, hard, brown hand, and remembered how I had shut up within its grasp the little white hand of Golden Hair, as if I had closed it over a white butterfly. Was I a fitting mate for so snowy and beautiful a bird, fit only to be kept in a dainty cage covered with flowers? I felt that I was not. I well remembered looking at a portfolio containing her water-colour drawings, while she was leaning over me, telling me what this was from, and where that was taken, that by chance I raised

my head suddenly, and looked into the large mirror before us, which reflected my brown sun-tanned face and broad shoulders, and her countenance white as a lily by the contrast, and her bright, long, golden ringlets falling down her white neck, while her bare snowy arms rested on the sleeve of my dark uniform, and my coarse curly hair looked like bunches of forest moss beside the silky curls that fell over and mingled with them, while she bent her head beside me, and I thought at the time that I should look in my place in a great rough garden, with my sleeves turned up and a spade in my hand, while hers would be on a pale-coloured ottoman, shaded with lace curtains, in a room bordered with a golden cornice, and papered with richly-plumaged birds and gaudily-coloured flowers!

Still, as I drove along, I felt that through thinking so long and so much about her as I then did, my mind must have been filled with her image much oftener than I had ever kept count of, and that it would be as difficult to shut out that sweet, smiling beautiful face, as to shut out the sunshine by only closing the eyes, while the golden glory still streamed full upon the quivering lids.

How thankful I was, the next moment, that dear Lily was not then riding with me. Had she been, as I then felt towards her, it would have required but little persuasion on her part to have conquered me, so kindly did I feel towards her, so unworthy of her unselfish love, so honoured by her thinking me deserving of that affection which so many sought in vain to obtain.

The difference of our station in life, her accomplishments and high connections, her youth, beauty, and inexperience, all that made for and appeared against our future happiness, would

have been scattered to the winds had she been with me while I was in this "melting mood," and looked up at me with her great blue beseeching eyes. I do believe I should have yielded, so strongly did my poor wavering heart plead in her favour.

But how was it that these feelings had never before mastered me? I couldn't tell. I could assign no reason, return no answer. It might be, I thought, that when we find we are beloved, a kindred feeling is kindled from the same gentle spark, though we were beforetime ignorant of what lay smouldering within.

How different our feeling towards a dog even, that frisks and barks and leaps about us, trying to lick our face and hands, and all of a quiver through the delight it cannot give utterance to, from that displayed towards another, which scarcely arises at our approach, and welcomes us with not even a wag of the tail.

While reasoning to myself in this way, I came at last to the conclusion that my usual calm judgment had received a terrible shaking when I was thrown out of my gig into the hedge, for there are other things connected with the human frame that become dislocated besides the joints, and I could not get rid of the tender feelings I had for Golden Hair without undergoing a terrible mental shaking.

To be trusted implicitly, to be told every pretty secret, to be sought in every little trouble, to be looked up to always, and relied upon next to Heaven as a protector, such had I been to Lily;—and it is not to be wondered at that she had woven a little net about my heart with her silken meshes, which it was very hard to break from and escape.

When I reached the end of my journey, I alighted and

stretched myself, pushing out my arms to the fullest extent, and feeling while I did so that I could do almost anything, and, first and before all things, my duty.

"He is the greatest conqueror who conquers himself," says one of the old heathen philosophers; and he saw how almost endless must be that battle, where every hour of the day there springs up a new enemy, who, if not slain at once, grows up to have a giant's strength with every minute he is permitted to live, until at last he is as hard to kill as the fabled Hydra.

That night, when I returned home, and all our family had gone to rest, I put out my hand, and took up the first book that was within reach from the shelf, and opened it without once glancing at the title. It was a volume of Thomas à Kempis, and my eye fell on the following passage in the twenty-first chapter of the third book:—

"No man has arrived at perfection who is not willing to face any trial from any hand. The difference of friend or foe, of superior, inferior, or equal; of a good-natured and conscientious, or a wicked, perverse, or vexatious man, ought not to be of any consideration: let the provocation be what it will, or come from whom it may, be only once or often repeated, it must be all the same.

"Nothing God appoints, though it seems a grievance, is ever done to the disadvantage of a good man, nor is there anything, however slight and trivial it may appear, when dutifully done, but what is rewarded.

"Let us, then, arm ourselves for the combat, and decline no trial that it is our duty to accept. Without fighting there is no obtaining the crown, and they who decline to suffer refuse to reign.

"Stand up, then, bravely, and acquit thyself like a man; repose and happiness can only be obtained by labour, like victory and triumph. But there can be no victory without enemies, no triumph until they are defeated, no conqueror without a battle."

How came I to take up that particular book, and why did it open at that page? I believe to this hour, some interposing power directed my mind to that passage, to strengthen me in the good resolution I had made to resist temptation, and encourage me in the hard battle I had to fight.

We were hay-making on one of Mr. Rose's farms.

CHAPTER XXI.

LEASE AND RELEASE.

I WAS glad on the following day to have something more to occupy my mind than that which formed the subject of my last chapter, and this change was caused through Mr. Lorrimer the lawyer calling to say that he had found a clear title to the freehold of my father's garden, and that it was our property, and that we were entitled to every shilling of rent that had ever been paid, and that no one had ever any right to receive a penny unless some deed of mortgage could be produced, and that no such deed had ever been found.

"It is quite true that your great-grandfather first took the

ground for a lease, or bargain and sale for a year," said the lawyer; "but on looking at the deed, I find it bears date the day next before the date of the release, commencing the day before the date of the lease was first executed. This was a common form of transfer a century ago, as it enabled the lessee to take possession of the land granted by the release, which release was a grant of inheritance to your great-grandfather and his heirs for ever. There is no word about demised, leased, &c., in the release, but a bargain and sale for a sum of money, and there is no better title existing. I suppose you have no knowledge as to how your grandfather first came to pay rent?"

"Not the least," I answered, "neither has my father. But are you sure this release is the original title to the portion of land my great-grandfather purchased?"

"I am so sure," replied the lawyer, "that were we to erect a station on your father's ground, without a legal transfer from him, it would be his, and all it contained. The release is the grant of the freehold, and will be our only title to the land, and none better can be had. I have seen Mr. Robinson's solicitor, and no defence will be made,—your father's claim is too clear to allow even of an action to lie against it. The evidence of a thousand witnesses would weigh as nothing beside the document in my possession. Mr. Robinson is wealthy, and is a fair-dealing gentleman, and admits that he has no deed to produce that gives him a shadow of a claim to your father's freehold. We must not be too hard upon him in recovering the rent your family have paid, for he is not to blame, but has inherited the error. Do you think your father would be satisfied if paid back twenty years' rent, which is as long as Mr. Robinson has received it?"

"It is entirely in your hands," I said, "and whatever you agree to will satisfy us. For it is just like finding so much money for which there is no owner. I certainly should like to find out how the Robinson family first came to receive rent of my grandfather, but that, I suppose, is beyond discovery."

"All I have been able to ascertain is, that Mr. Robinson's grandfather laid claim to the whole of the Daisy-Field estate, to which he had no more right than I have," replied the lawyer, "though such claims have been made hundreds of times, and will be again. He served all the holders with notices either to quit or pay rent in future to himself, so, I suppose, he frightened your grandfather into doing what he did. And now I must be off, for I have a dozen engagements; but before going I must thank you for your handsome conduct to my son. The Captain and I shall be able to capture little Golden Hair for him, I have no doubt, and, poor fellow, he is quite in a bad way about her. In a few days I shall have the pleasure of handing you one cheque for a thousand pounds from us, and one from Mr. Robinson's solicitor for two hundred. And how is the pretty Rosebud?" And without waiting for me to tell him that Mary Rose was quite well, away he went to keep his dozen engagements.

I knew just enough of law to understand that a release was a fact which the word itself expressed, and that the person making it is called the releasor, and he in whose favour the grant is made, the releasee, but I was not aware before that it was necessary to make a lease for a year before a legal title could be given by the release; and yet, when I came to look at the matter a little more closely, I saw at once, that unless there was a lease, there would be nothing to release.

By such simple forms were estates handed down from ancient times, through many generations, and as Mr. Lorrimer was a crack conveyancer, I felt that our claim to the freehold of my father's garden was as secure as if it bore the seal of the Lord Chancellor. I also well remembered my father saying that he had heard of the claim made by one of the Robinsons to the whole of the Daisy-Field Farm estate, through my grandfather, and that there were people living at the time who believed the claim to be a just one, and that if it could have been established, it would, at least, have brought into the Robinson family twenty thousand pounds a-year. But, as the lawyer said, somebody or another was constantly rising up and making such claims, and if you believed all you heard, scarcely an estate was held anywhere throughout the country that a dozen or more of people did not put in a claim for. But for the light Mr. Lorrimer had thrown on the old document, I should never have discovered that it gave my father a just title to the freehold of one acre of ground.

Hitherto I had kept the matter a secret from the family, for no other reason than the fear of such a communication awakening hopes that might never be realised. Now I could see my way clearly to raising a hundred a-year certain, as an income for my parents, from the interest of the money alone, with the provision I had already made for them, and giving my sister Jane something for her marriage portion, with the prospect of a future thousand when it should please God to take to himself those who were so dear to us both, and I prayed that that time might be far distant.

Nothing but good had sprung out of what my dear father, in his despondency, considered evil, when the railway com-

pany took in the greater portion of our garden; yet, had it not been for this, the discovery, very probably, would never have been made that he alone was the rightful owner of the freehold. Is not this one of the greatest blessings of an ever-watchful Provider, that we are not permitted to know what good or evil is in store for us? For how restless would be our lives if we knew something was coming that would better our worldly condition, and how impatient we should be until the time came for us to enter into the new enjoyment; if, on the other hand, we knew there was a great calamity on its way to overtake us, how we should dread the approaching day, and, sitting down with folded hands, give ourselves up to despair!

My interview with the lawyer took place in the country while we were hay-making on one of Mr. Rose's farms, and if I was merry-hearted before, no marvel I felt in such good spirits after, that it was with difficulty I could prevent myself from throwing down my rake, and returning home to communicate the good tidings to my parents. The boys were with me, for I made the latter my companions whenever I could.

I had fitted up at the end of one of my large greenhouses, where Harry kept my books, a shelf filled with works on gardening; for besides Bill, who was, next to Harry, one of my head gardeners, I had now two more boys from the Reformatory under them, and both likely to make good flower-gardeners. Some few hours after Mr. Lorrimer had gone, and I had arranged in my own mind how I should break the good news to my parents, I went home, knowing by that time dinner would be cleared away, and my dear father enjoying his pipe and looking at the paper, which he was not now compelled

to hurry over, so fortunate had I been in all my undertakings.

"Well, father, I have found another purchaser for your garden," I said, "who is ready to pay a good price, if you are willing to part with it."

"What, do they want to take the rood of ground from us?" he said, laying the newspaper on the table. "I think they would burn their fingers, playing at that game, my lad, if they only had to pay for the greenhouses at a fair valuation. It is not the railway company, sure-ly; is it?"

"But it is the railway company," I answered, sorry for what I said, as I saw a troubled expression on my mother's face, and knew she was thinking about having to quit our dear old home. "In a word, father, I have to congratulate you on being a little freeholder, and handsomely as you consider the company have behaved to you, they are ready to pay you a thousand pounds if you will make over to them your right and title to the whole of the garden, and leave us our rood of ground and cottage on payment of a pepper-corn rent, some five shillings a year, as an acknowledgment that we are the company's tenants; and more than all, Mr. Robinson, whom we have always looked upon as our landlord, will be very thankful if you will let him off by accepting twenty years' back rent, which he had no more right to receive than our boy, gipsy Harry."

Both mother and father listened to me in speechless astonishment, while tears of joy swelled up in the eyes of my dear sister, through which she smiled like the sweet sunshine through one of green April's gentle showers. I then, in the best way I could, explained the nature of the document which put my father in possession of the freehold, and also stated that Mr. Lorrimer had no doubt he could recover by action the whole

of the rent the Robinsons had received from the beginning, as far back as the time of my grandfather.

"There shall be no Law of any kind, by my consent," said my father; "if the freehold is ours, it must be made over properly to the company before they can build a station, though a thousand pounds is as much as I ever got off the ground in twenty years, and seems a deal too much to pay for it. As to Mr. Robinson, if he thinks well and good to pay two hundred pounds of his own free will, and it is ours by right, as he is very rich, why he can do it. But I can't help feeling grateful to him for one thing, and that is, while believing he had a just right to receive the rent, he never in his life even so much as asked or sent for it, but waited until it was taken to him, and many a time he has said to me, "Now I don't want this money if you have any use for it, and would quite as lief you owed me a little back rent as not."

"That's gospel truth," said my mother, "and what is more, on several occasions Mr. Robinson gave me back a sovereign when you were little, 'to buy something for the children,' as he said; and I do believe he would as soon have thrust his arm into a red-hot fire as put it out to receive a shilling of rent from us if he hadn't believed that he was justly entitled to it."

"I'm sure of one thing," said my father, "we are a great deal better off than we ever should have been had I known the freehold was ours, and we had not paid any rent, for I should only have been tempted to raise money on it, and got to experimentalising on the ground in some new-fangled way of growing vegetables, and no doubt lost it all; and as for not paying rent, why we might have lived a bit better, and that would have been about all, and I question whether it would have improved our health."

"It would only have caused you to let your waistcoats out a few years sooner," said my sister, "and have saved you many a day's hard labour, though after all perhaps you would have been none the better for it. We have great cause to be very thankful."

While we were talking a note came from Mary Rose, stating that her father was suffering under another attack of gout, and would not be able to leave his chamber, she feared, for a day or two, and would I be kind enough to come over as soon as possible. Of course I promised to do so.

I had felt rather uneasy about my oldest and truest friend for some time past, every fresh attack of "his old complaint," as he called it, lasted longer than the preceding one, and when he recovered, instead of getting out as he previously did, he indulged a little longer in some choice sherry he had received in quarter casks, which he fancied suited him better than so much of his own strong home-brewed ale. I think his easy good-natured doctor was also rather partial to that particular sherry, as I never remembered his refusing to take a glass, nor ever calling without an invitation to partake of it, and declaring that there was not a single twinge of gout in a whole shipload of it.

We all liked the doctor, and I will say this, that he took pretty plentifully of the same medicine that he allowed his patient; and when in confidence I told Mary that it was her duty to consult some eminent physician, who would disapprove of her father taking so much sherry, she said the doctor was candid enough to admit that it was of very little consequence whether her father drank a quarter cask more or less within the year, as the gout had got so thoroughly into his system that all the medicine in the world could not eradicate it entirely,

and as for abstinence, it would only shorten his days, and lay him up at once, and make his life miserable.

Instead of dreading the disease, the light-hearted florist only laughed at it, pointed to his swathed limb, and said, "George, my lad, you see what you may expect in time, through dining and keeping company with jolly gentlemen. But it is a gentleman's complaint after all, if that's any comfort."

I didn't think it was much comfort, though I never said so.

When tolerably free from pain he also slept a great deal more than he ought, dropping off into a doze the moment conversation ceased, and sometimes in the midst of it; his memory also began to fail him, causing him to forget names and dates, and prices, and making such mistakes at times as would have caused great confusion had there not been tried and watchful eyes about him, and ready hands and clear heads to rectify all his errors.

These failings caused me a great deal of extra work, for Mrs. Rose had spoken to me about them, her tears falling fast all the time, and asked me if I had not noticed how thin Mary was becoming, telling me that she had scarcely any appetite, and requesting me to take the management of the business accounts, if I could possibly, and to leave her daughter only the cash books to look after, and enter what was received and paid.

I had done so, and through a system of my own and the assistance of my sister, who copied out all the accounts, and cast each customer's up on separate slips, I was able to post up the week's business in a few hours, thereby saving Miss Rose an immense amount of labour.

All the business I transacted for her father I kept a separate account of, giving no trouble to any one, but paying into the

bank the cheques I received, and making entries of all I drew, or ordered to be paid. After my friend's hand took to swelling, I even signed the cheques, and by the aid of a stumpy quill-pen, wrote such a capital imitation of "Robert Rose," that he said, were he put into a witness-box he shouldn't like to swear the signature was not his own, nor did the bank ever discover the sanctioned imitation.

I drew bills for large amounts on those we credited, never consulting any one, but when they were taken up paid the money into Mr. Rose's bankers, and when they were dishonoured left the matter in Mr. Lorrimer's hands, for through my intercession he was now Mr. Rose's only solicitor.

As to my own business, it thrived as well under Harry, Bill, and my father's management as if I had attended to it myself, for my connection was made, and had I not had a single customer, I could have used thousands of more plants than we were able to grow for the parks and gardens that I had now the entire management of, for Mr. Rose left all to me: and the plans were carried out by persons of my own selecting, for I had no one to interfere with me, and did my duty to all to the best of my ability.

A little cottage stands at the foot of the well-wooded hill-side.

CHAPTER XXII.

I FIND IT HARD TO CONQUER MY EVIL NATURE.

On receiving the note from Miss Rose I waited on her at once, though I had very important business to attend to, and but for the lawyer calling, might have been miles away when it arrived. It was a very hot day at the end of July, and the door of the conservatory stood open, as well as that of the little counting house which looked into it, and there I found Mary Rose sitting with her elbow resting on the table, and her cheek pillowed on the palm of her hand.

She looked very sorrowful.

She rose from her chair, and taking my hand, held it between both her own, and said, "Oh, George, father has passed such a wretched night, and neither mother nor I have had any

sleep, and the doctor says he can do nothing for him, and I begin to fear he will never be well again. He is asleep now, but last night he thought he was dying, and he wished me to tell you all he said, for when he was well enough he did nothing but talk, and I am sure, if he had strength, it would distress him to repeat to you all he said to me, for they were his wishes —his last as he believed—about three this morning."

I moved her chair forward, and taking another, sat down beside her, holding her hand, for she was in tears, and said, "Let us hope for the best; what are your father's wishes? Tell me them all, and the fulfilment of them I will hold as sacred as if I had received them with his last breath."

"I know you will. I am sure you will," she said, and the tears fell fast. "Father said if he was taken away, he should like things to be carried on just as they are now, by you, until the term of his contracts expired. That he had neither instructions nor commands to leave you, as you knew all and everything much better than he did. That he had made no will, nor ever should, knowing the love that existed between myself and mother, and—and—there is something else dear mother will tell you, which I cannot name. But I hope father will soon be well enough to speak to you; and he made me promise that as soon as I saw you, I was to say what I have said."

"So far as the contracts go," I said, "I have seen the proper authorities, and they know the state of your father's health, and are quite satisfied with my management in every way. Let us hope for the best; your dear father has a good constitution. Can't you all three go to the sea-side for a month? Jane could come here. I'll tell you a secret; you know how clever Hounslow is, how much he is sought after, what attention he paid to my

sister's complaint. I spoke to him about your father, and you are not perhaps aware how difficult it is to get one doctor's opinion of another doctor's patient, unless he is called in professionally. Well, I told Hounslow about the sherry, and he said, 'get rid of his doctor, let him live moderately, and stave in his quarter casks of choice sherry, or confine himself to a pint a day. This can only be done by removing him to the sea-side, and taking care that his doctor does not follow him.' The busy season is over, and there is nothing but what I can attend to, even to remaining in the house at night, until Jane returns of a morning, while you are all away."

"Should he get well enough to be removed, we will go to Brighton," she said, "and I can run up here at least once a week, and you must come to us on a Wednesday and Saturday, returning on Thursday and Monday mornings. That you must manage, and I know no other conditions that will tempt father to go. And now I will send mother to you, and take her place by his bedside. Do not go away until I have seen you again."

In a minute or so her mother came into the parlour, her husband was still asleep. He had awakened once and felt easier. He had been indulging rather freely the day before. She believed he was in no immediate danger now, and was very thankful for my suggestion. They would get rid of the doctor, and go to Brighton.

All this was said in her usual manner, though it struck me, while she was speaking, some other subject was uppermost in her thoughts, or I fancied so, in consequence of what Mary had said to me.

In as delicate a way as possible, I alluded to the conversation that had passed between myself and her daughter, nearly

repeating myself in my promise to fulfil his wishes, then adding, "but he said something which she left for you to communicate. What is it?"

"It relates to a subject which your mother and I have often talked over, George, and hoped to see accomplished, before we were called away," she said, "and yet one that we have never spoken to either of you about; I don't know why. As we draw nearer the grave, we become more anxious for those we leave behind—it is so now with my husband—trusting too often for that to be done, which we ought to have forwarded, or might have seen done, and advised and guided, and watched over. Somehow all this is very wrong. My husband will make no will, he leaves us to your care, his great business to your management. Whenever it pleases God to call him, we shall be left well provided for, as far as money goes. But were I to be beckoned away too, George, there would be no one but you to look after Mary and the business. This is what troubled him last night, what troubles us both. We have always trusted you like a son, why should you not be one to us, and take Mary to yourself?"

I need not say that in some measure I was prepared for such an offer, the implicit faith placed in me in every way could lead to no other conclusion. But why had it not been mentioned before? This thought had often crossed my mind, and led me to believe that they were on the look-out for an offer from some wealthy suitor, and I, who have nothing to conceal, am compelled to confess, that when such thoughts left a painful impression on my mind, I sought for solace in the society of Golden Hair, for her sunny smile and pleasant prattle soon chased away all such unpleasant reflections.

Mrs. Rose left the room, and left me to my own thoughts;

we were too intimate to require a word of apology, it was what she often did. I tried hard to smother the feeling, but it would rise up, do all I could to keep it down.

I understood his business thoroughly; everything was to go on just as it did, under my management, just as it had done for some months, under my guidance, just as if no such person as Mr. Rose was in existence.

While in this frame of mind, everything I looked at was distorted. I was chosen because of my usefulness. I was the Jacob to whom Rachel was offered, because no one else was so capable of labouring in those large fields, where work must still be done, no matter at what cost.

Then rang upon my ear, the words, "Charley Smith is sweet on her," and "I think young Euston is making up for our Polly," and how rich the families were! but not a hint of hope for me. I was the Jacob who watered the flocks, and they prospered.

I started; I turned my head and looked round, there was no one near me, yet the words, "How ungrateful! Who made you what you are?" seemed to fall upon my ear in a clear whisper, while a sudden chilliness seized upon me, extending to the very tips of my fingers, and I felt myself guilty of the deepest ingratitude for allowing such thoughts to take possession of me as I had done.

What trust had been placed in me! to what eminence I was raised! Excepting his funded property, I had the command of all Mr. Rose possessed, even the banker's book had been in my keeping for weeks, and he had never once asked to see what I had paid in, or drawn out.

If he had not spoken to me direct to the point, it had been inferred in hundreds of instances that to me alone he trusted

his wife and daughter, and all he possessed. No words he could have uttered would have conveyed his meaning so plainly as his undoubting trust and firm confidence in everything I said or did; and homely as was his nature, and plain spoken as he was at all times, there was an innate delicacy about him in some things, which prevented him from giving utterance to his thoughts, especially in matters relating to his daughter.

I do not think if it would even have saved us from separating for ever, that he could have asked me, "If I loved his daughter, for her to become my wife." Anything more repugnant to his nature than to put such a question to either of us, I could scarcely conceive. Yet there were opportunities enough, for we talked about the marriage of my sister Jane, and the curate, and of adding more rooms to our cottage, so that Jane might remain at home with her husband, as I thought my father and mother might feel lonely without her.

While these thoughts had been passing through my mind, Mrs. Rose had been in and out of the parlour more than once, and I do not think I even spoke to her, so intent was I in communing with myself. She was again about to leave the room, when I said, "If Mr. Rose is not well enough to see me, will you ask Mary to come down, as she wished me not to go away until I saw her again, and I must go to Purley Park to-day, about those plants."

I saw in a moment by the expression of her countenance that "more was meant than met the ear," when she said, "You had better go to Purley Park, if you are going, by yourself, and well weigh over my husband's wishes while you drive down. He will, I hope, be up, and well enough to

see you by the time you come back, and you can see Mary after."

She was evidently displeased at the way I had received her offer, and "going by myself" was aiming a side shaft at pretty Golden Hair. Why did she do that?

Now if there was one journey more than another that Lily liked riding with me, it was the one I was then going, as from Purley I mostly drove to Sanderstead and Croydon Crook, and back by the way of Hays, Shirley, Beckenham, and Sydenham, and home either by the way of Peckham Rye or Dulwich, just as Golden Hair decided.

I wished Mrs. Rose had not said what she did; also that I had been driving in some other direction. Mary had but gone that round with me once, Lily, at least half-a-dozen times; and where a little cottage stands, at the foot of the well-wooded hill-side, that goes steep and abrupt as a wall from the high road, she had once alighted to beg a drink of water, and taken such a fancy to the little old woman who lived there that she promised her we should come back to tea; and by the time we returned, the old woman had been somewhere or other among her friends, and got us honey and new-laid eggs, and rich cream, and prepared for us hot short-cakes, and while the horse regaled himself in the little paddock, we sat down to our Attic feast, and never did I see Golden Hair enjoy herself more than in that thatched cottage, the front of which looks over the Downs.

Then how delighted she was on one or two occasions to bring down our lamb or mutton chops, and to have them dressed by the old woman, with a few peas or new potatoes fresh from her little garden, and with what pleasure she drank the table-beer which the cottager sold to thirsty wayfarers at a

penny a pot, declaring that Bass's bitter ale, of which the Captain kept a good stock in bottles, was not to be compared with it.

Yes, born lady as she was, and beautiful as "the opening eye-lids of the dawn," there was a love for what was simple and natural about Golden Hair that made her very winning; and every rood of ground I drove over was somehow associated with her image. Well did I remember the chilly autumn evening when, returning along that very road rather late, she fell asleep, and I drew my driving-coat close round her, while she pillowed her pretty head on my side, and never woke, as I held her folded in my bridle-arm until we reached her home: and how, when I lifted her down, she said, "I was a dear good George for taking so much care of her, and keeping her so warm, and letting her have such a sweet sleep, and that I made her like me."

Mary Rose had never said anything to me so affectionate as that, nor I thought ever looked so kindly on me as Lily then did.

Then I thought of all Mr. Rose and his family had done for me, and hated myself for feeling as I did.

Supposing he had died in the night, as he might have done, and as, at one time, they feared he would, what would my feelings then have been? I set my teeth together, and tried my hardest to realise such a change.

How I should have listened to, weighed, and felt every word that they told me he had uttered, and while bowed down under a load of sorrow, held sacred his slightest wish, and had my mind wholly occupied with the thought of how I might best fulfil his dying desire.

What possessed me? What change had come over me?

There was a sad want of right feeling somewhere, which I could not get at. I was sorry to find he was so ill, grieved to see Mary Rose in tears, listened with attention, and felt all her mother had said, and yet somehow my mind and heart seemed divided, as if there was no concentration in what I either thought or felt.

But it came at last unawares, in a moment, through recalling his countenance as when, the day before we parted, one hand in mine, the other on my shoulder, in that look he gave me when he said, "George, I sleep as sound when I'm once in bed as if I hadn't a thing in the world to concern me; so happy and contented am I at knowing how well everything is cared for by thee, that I often say to myself, were I never to wake again, I shouldn't be missed in business, so well has George got everything in hand." And there was a look of affection in his eyes, and a sincerity in his countenance, and a warm friendly trust in the tight grip of his great honest hand, which told how true and earnest he was.

What friend had I ever met with like him? From the first commencement of my struggle he had taken me by the hand, and never for a moment released his hold. He had been as faithful to me as I had been to him, though he might have found dozens to have served him as well as I had done, while I could not have hoped to have found so true a friend had I been the servant of a thousand men, and done my duty to all. Had I been his own son he could not have studied my interest more than he had done, and he had made my income that of a gentleman, independent of my own profitable business. Supposing he had died in the night! that instead of sleeping tranquilly and almost free from pain, as he was when I called, I had gone into his chamber with muffled feet and

blinded eyes, while the Unseen Shadow fell upon the bed, and I found there only silence and mystery! That when I had taken his cold hand there would have been no returning pressure; that he could not have understood me if I had spoken; that those eyes which at times beamed as affectionately on me as they did on his own daughter, would have no light, no expression, but were turned inward, as if looking at that mystery which the living can never know.

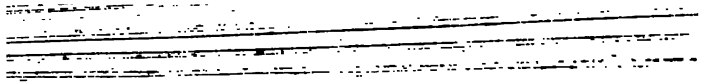
The hard rock was struck at last, and the waters freely flowed. Instead of driving on to Purley, I turned up the more lonely road that leads to Sanderstead, ashamed lest I should meet any one who might see my great grief; and drawing my gig into an opening of the right-hand coppice, I entered the park, threw myself down under a tree, and let the fountain of my sorrow flow unchecked, until I had no more tears to shed.

Then I dried my eyes, and buttoning my coat tight over my sorrow, drove back to Purley, and transacted my business, never showing a symptom of the inward pain that was gnawing at my heart.

I thought no more of Golden Hair, but of Mary Rose, left without that fond indulgent father, whose greatest care in this world was to promote her happiness, she of whom I was so unworthy, she who had sent all she possessed to help me, and, as I learnt afterwards, had even declined an invitation to a ball rather than break into the money she wished me to have, because she wanted a new dress.

I felt that I was not half so good as when I was a poor boy, and carried the produce of my father's garden to market, grateful for every crown I received, and never more delighted than when I was contributing to the happiness of others.

"I entered the park, and threw myself under a tree." Chap. 22, p. 232.



Prosperity had spoilt me. I had lost much of that humility and kindly feeling which sweetened the poverty of my boyish days.

But I resolved that I would at once begin to undo what I had done amiss. I would keep a guarded watch over every word, action, and feeling, and pray for strength to do battle against all that was evil in my nature, not to be delivered from the temptation only, but able to resist it in whatever form it might appear.

I had driven past the cottage where I had spent so many happy hours with Golden Hair, without turning round my head to look at it.

I would make a full confession and tell Mary Rose everything, and own how unworthy I was of her.

Whichever way she decided should have no influence over me in fulfilling my duty to both her mother and herself, if what I most feared should happen, and that affectionate husband and fond father be called away.

I would strive my hardest to become as good as my sister Jane, and endeavour to win back the peace of mind I had once enjoyed.

Oh, how ungrateful I had been to entertain such harsh, unjust, and evil thoughts as had that day passed through my mind. They had entered my ears like the whisperings of those unseen spirits who assailed Bunyan's Pilgrim when he journeyed through the dark valley, and had no power to silence them.

I felt how weak I was of myself to resist temptation, and prayed mentally for support and help from that Power which never withholds it when its aid is asked in a humble and contrite spirit; and after that I felt as if trampling the evil of

my nature under foot, as if endued with some stronger power than had ever before possessed me.

I do not think that ever in my life I felt in a calmer mood than when, after sending away my horse and gig, I entered Mr. Rose's house, and heard that he was well enough to sit up, and they were going to take tea in his chamber, where I was invited to join them.

One of those quiet villages we are all so fond of.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW MR. ROSE "HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD" AT ONCE.

"HERE I am once more, my lad, and glad to see you, as I always am. I begin to think I was more scared than hurt, and the greatest trouble I had on my mind was the fear of not seeing you again, for I've a deal to say; a great many things I want to talk about, and I shall sleep much easier after I've said 'em."

He spoke quite cheerfully, holding out the unbandaged hand, which I shook, while his swathed foot rested on what he called "his old friend," which was a kind of sloping foot-stool, that fastened to and projected from his "gouty" chair.

Excepting that his voice was not quite so firm, there was very little to show that he had suffered more from the last attack than any that had preceded it. I was glad to see him drink his cup of strong tea, and eat his muffin, and leave untouched either his choice sherry or home-brewed ale.

"It's just like you, George," he continued, "to think so much about me, and to let Polly and mother have a holiday, and while we're enjoying ourselves at the sea-side, to undertake all the work; not that I'm of any use now, though Polly is. But we'll go, my lad, because you wish it; and I'll take water to my sherry, and leave the strong ale for you to drink, and my dear old wife shall be my doctor, and you'll come down to us every other day; trains come down to Brighton late, and leave early, and if I don't see you every other day or so, I shall mope and get worse, and come back again, and the sea air will do me no good. Couldn't Polly and you run down by the train to-morrow, and be back for tea, and take some nice apartments for us that look over the "blue, the fresh, the ever free,"—though it's a bad thing for plants is that salt spray. We should want three bed-rooms, one for you, one for Polly, and another for me and mother; those, and a sitting-room would do; and never mind the expense; take 'em for a month, and pay half the money down. Can you find time to go?"

"Not to-morrow," I said, "but the day following." I told him what I had to do, where to go, and whom to see, for it was necessary that I should see the foremen of our works; men whom I could trust in every way, "and then, the day after that I shall be also able to go down with you, though I must return at night, for the following day will be Saturday, and I like to see the men paid, though I can trust to Greenwood,

Rollet, and Smith, keeping right time, and making out correct lists of wages to be paid."

"They are all good men and true," he said, "and have been made so through the example you set them. I never could manage my men as you do, George, though I gave them plenty of beer, and paid them well too. It's for want of a right knack, I suppose. I think I'll have another cup of tea, mother; it's better for me, I dare say, than so much sherry, though old Barton, of Brompton, for the last thirty years of his life drank his four bottles a-day, but he used to say his inside was tough as upper leather, and he lived to see eighty-six. What a cloud of business I did with him. He first brought out "Mrs. Fitzgerald," that was in the Prince Regent's time, and she had nearly all the beds in Carlton Gardens covered with it. It was a pretty flower."

When the tea-things were removed he pleaded hard for a glass of sherry-and-water, "just to whet his pipe, and make him feel comfortable," as he said, and there was a tremulousness in his voice as he added, "then you can leave us to ourselves, for I have a few things to say to George which, not many hours ago, I believed would never be said by me. But God does all things for the best, and but for that sharp attack last night, I might have put it off until it had been too late."

I said something, I know not what, for my mind turned to that vision of death which had haunted me like a reality when I turned into the deer-park to hide my great agony, and saw everything in that spacious chamber as I saw it now, excepting that the cold calm face I then grieved over was now beaming upon me.

As I got up to open the door for Mrs. Rose and her

daughter to leave the chamber, Mary put out her hand, and as I took it she said, "Don't go away again without first seeing me, as you did this morning," and I was about to make some evasive reply that would conceal what had transpired between me and her mother, when her father said, "Kiss her, George, that will be the sincerest apology."

And I kissed her in the presence of her parents. It was the first kiss I had ever given her in earnest, though I had raised her hand to my lips in our joking way very often.

She blushed as I still held her hand, while she stood silent with downcast eyes, and was, as I thought, about to speak, when her father said, "You'll have plenty of time to court after to-morrow, all the way to Brighton and back; and he'll see thee again before he goes, never fear Polly, while mother gets me to bed. And now be off, while we get up a little conspiracy which will all come to light, I dare say, before long."

So the door closed on the first act of the drama in which I bore so conspicuous a part. The sherry-and-water and pipe were brought in, and after a few whiffs my good old friend said, "I suppose I needn't say a word more about Polly; that's all settled now?"

"Yes; by your orders it was signed, sealed, and delivered in your presence," I said; "and I shall expect to find the name of Charley Smith among the suicides, or some other sides."

Had I spoken as I felt, my tears would have fallen at the thought of how unworthy I was of her, and ill-deserving of the great happiness in store for me.

"That's right," he said; "it's no use making a fuss about it, is it? You're to live with us, you know. This is a great

rambling old-fashioned house, and while we are at Brighton it's to be fairly turned out of the windows by painters and paper-hangers, and I don't know who besides. Your mother and my old wife have settled all about that, and she'll come and look after the men while Jane's here. And as you're not going to take Polly away from us, there needn't be any fuss or stew about anything, need there, George?"

I told him I would do everything he wished me to do, and be a very obedient boy, and try to be as good a son to him as Mary was a daughter; and though I spoke lightly, my heart was very full at the time, and I should have broken down, I think, had I not eased it a little by saying, "I wish I were worthier of Mary than I am; so kind, and true, and faithful a friend as she has ever been to me, I feel that I have not devoted myself to her wholly, as I ought to have done, knowing her value, but I will make amends for all I have done amiss, and, by watching every opportunity of promoting her happiness in future, strive to make up for my neglect of the past."

"We none of us are so good as we ought to be," he said, kindly; "the holy old prayer is true, and I don't believe there's a man living but, when he confesses his faults, feels that he has done many things he oughtn't, and not done a many that he ought. I dare say Polly was a bit hurt now and then at your taking Golden Hair out so often as you did, but as I always said you were under the command of her father, and it was your duty to obey orders. I know it was the case with me before I was married, when I was head gardener to Glenshaw, his daughter would come dancing out after me in the grounds, and want to know all about this, that, and t'other, and my young woman, as I used then to call my dear old wife, got to be as jealous as

Old Boots, and many a good cry she had over it, though I told her I would sooner kneel down to kiss the ground she put her little foot upon, than give Miss Glenshaw a smack on the lips, if she asked me. And so I would. If George doesn't like Polly, better than any other lass living, I've said to my old wife, he's just the lad to tell me so."

I spoke as I felt when I said I had never seen her equal, and if I had the pick out of all the young ladies I had ever known, she would be the one I should select above all others. So he gave me his hale hand and I shook it, and the matter was settled. Mary Rose was to be my wife, and on that score no more could be said.

"I scarcely feel any pain now, George," he said, "and I haven't a trouble on my mind that hangs heavier than the pollen on a flower. Were it to please God to take me to Himself to night, excepting to Him—and He is very merciful—I feel that I have left no duty undone, thanks to thy help, for had it not been for that I should long ago have forfeited my deposit and thrown up my government contracts, profitable as they are. There is enough and more than enough for us all, for God has prospered me greatly; and if you think well and good, when you take dear Polly off my hands, to take all my business connections with her, and never let me hear any more about them, except telling me of your success, I shall be very thankful. There's nothing connected with my affairs but what you thoroughly understand in every way, and though it would perhaps be as well to keep up my name, as it's like that musk-rose under my window, an old standard, I would rather the "Co." became the firm, and that I had nothing more to do with it, except giving thee my best advice, if ever thou shouldst want it, which would be very seldom indeed, as you

are a better man of business than ever I was in my life, though I say it that shouldn't, because it's the truth. From the day thou wilt take Polly for better or for worse, I wash my hands for ever of the business, and never touch another shilling of the profits. If you have a mind to sell it altogether it will fetch a tidy penny, and there's more than enough for us all, as I have said before, and we might 'stand at ease,' as you say to your men, and watch the rest of the world go through their exercise, and go to one of those quiet villages we are all so fond of."

I told him that ever since I could distinguish a weed from a plant, and pull it up, my time, one way or another, had been fully occupied, and that no sentence I could undergo would be to me a greater misery than that which doomed me to lead a life of idleness. That many a home was made unhappy through the master lacking employment, which caused the hours to hang heavily on his hands, and led him to interfere with domestic arrangements which he ought not to meddle with, as children run into mischief only because they have nothing better to do; and that I would rather be poor and have to work all my life for my daily bread than sit down doing nothing but eating it in idleness; and appealed to him as to whether or not he entertained the same views when he was as young as I was. He admitted he did.

"You have done your long day's work," I added, "and done it well; and I hope will be able to sit down with folded arms through the evenings of a yet long life. With me it is still morning, and I should like to be able to look back with as much satisfaction as you do when it draws to the close of the day."

"You are right, George," he replied; "to old age only

ought rest to be allowed, when it has fairly borne the burthen and heat of the day that I have done. And now, my lad, I begin to feel as if I wanted to go to the Land of Nod; and I dare say while my dear old wife comes up and makes me ready for the journey thou'lt find plenty to say to Mary until she comes downstairs again. So good night, and God bless thee, my son."

I had so many papers to arrange, and such preparations to make, that I could spare very few minutes to talk to Mary. She knew it, and instead of pouting her pretty lips, as too many young ladies would have done under similar circumstances, set to and checked the accounts as I called them over, knowing that we should have time enough to talk about our own affairs while journeying to Brighton and back; so that when Mrs. Rose came downstairs she found us as busy as some Darby and Joan, who, having closed the shop, had sat down amicably to sum up the takings of the day. Why should it be otherwise?

What I here write I hope parents will read. I think the world would go on all the better if boys and girls were brought up and instructed in the knowledge that marriage is as necessary an end as death; a matter to be met and looked at full in the face instead of tabooing it, as too many do, considering it an unfitting subject to talk of before youths and maidens, who, unadvised, plunge into it as a foolish traveller plunges into the wilderness of an unknown country, without either map or guide.

Parents are generally careful enough in selecting a school, trade, or profession for their children, while in too many instances they scarcely bestow a thought on that more important settlement on which the happiness of a whole life depends until it is too late.

If mothers would talk to their daughters while they are girls, and fathers to their sons while they are boys, of the necessity of caution in forming intimate acquaintance with young people of either sex, unless they were very worthy, as it might affect their future happiness so long as this life lasts; and speak boldly of such intimacy either often leading to marriage, or to a misplaced attachment hard to uproot, when one far worthier entertained an affection which could meet with no honest return on account of that prior engagement, which had ripened unaware; if parents would do this, there would be fewer unhappy unions than there are.

Many fathers are more careful in preserving the purity of their horses, cattle, and sheep, than that of their children, whom they too often allow to form connections with plausible adventurers, of whose origin they fail to inquire until it is too late.

I write this in the noon of my manhood, having seen a great deal amongst my wide circle of acquaintance of both sexes, many of them the sons and daughters of very wealthy and highly respectable parents.

I liked my dear mother and Mrs. Rose for the praise they bestowed on their daughters for household management, for when some favourite dish was extolled it was pleasant to be told that Mary or Jane had made it.

When a mere boy, I used to go to market with my father or mother when they purchased provisions, and by listening to what they said, and looking at what they directed my attention to, I was able to distinguish good meat from bad; and had I always remained a poor working gardener, such knowledge would have been very useful; and as it was, when I became householder, the butcher soon found it was useless to send me

inferior meat, as it was returned with a threat that if "tried on" again I should cease to be a customer.

Young ladies ought to be able to distinguish good tea, coffee, and sugar, and such like things, from bad; for beside economy, such knowledge is essential to the supplying of home comforts.

Nothing in this life is certain; riches take wing and flee away. Banks break, and shares that yield a princely profit one year are worth nothing the next. "I am the only man," said long-headed Louis Philippe, "fit to be the king of the French; because I believe I am the only king that ever blacked his own boots," which he did when he was a tutor in America.

Young ladies nursed in the lap of wealth, who never knew how to do anything but sing indifferently, play worse, and paint wretchedly, get married; their young husbands speculate, fail, and they fall into poverty; and if there were a few apples in the house, a little sugar, flour, and dripping, they know no more how to make a pie out of such ingredients than they know how to make little Billy a new shirt out of an old sheet.

I well remember calling on a brother officer one day to see how I could best assist him, as he had got bailiffs in the house for rent, and finding his pretty young wife very red in the face with anger, while the servant stood before her in great confusion, having forgotten to provide and send up a cucumber with the salmon. Such an omission would never have ruffled the temper of either myself or Mary Rose.

A golden pathway leading to the gatés of Heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"TO BRIGHTON AND BACK IN A DAY."

On the following day, what with dispatching letters, and driving here and there, and looking over the works we had on hand, and leaving instructions with our foremen and overlookers, I managed to place matters in such working order that the machinery I had set in motion would go on well enough for a day or two without my superintendence. As for my own greenhouses, as before stated, Harry and Bill were such capital florists, that they needed no looking after; they had but to be

told what was to be done, and they did it; and the other two boys from the Reformatory I had placed under them were equally attentive.

So all was in readiness for my journey to Brighton the morning after, and when I called in the evening I found, to my great delight, that Mr. Rose was in the parlour, having come downstairs without assistance while they were preparing tea, intending to take it with him in his chamber. He was very merry while telling me how his wife and daughter stared when he opened the door and said "Thank you, I've come to carry my tea upstairs with me when I go to bed, and now I'm ready for it." There was also much merriment when he asked me to give him a cheque, so that he might have a little money in his pocket when he got to Brighton, and that he hoped I should be pretty liberal with him.

No one, saving myself, had drawn a cheque for weeks, for his cheque-book was always now in my possession. I handed Mrs. Rose some notes and gold, which I had drawn out that day, and told her to be sure and not let him spend too much of his money in wine, as it wasn't a good thing for his complaint.

The doctor came in during the evening, and didn't quite approve of his profitable patient going to the sea-side, as he said he was afraid he would find the air too bracing. He was, however, honest enough to advise his best friend to take less sherry, and to get out as often as he could. I have no doubt Mr. Rose, in his hearty way, would have invited him down, had I not spoken to his wife beforehand, and so put a stop to the social meeting. She, however, placed a twenty-pound note in the doctor's hands, and told him that would do for him to go on with until he returned from the sea-side; and this put the doctor in a good humour over his sherry.

I have not before stated that I had caught a little brother of Harry's, who was always making "coach-wheels" in the streets, and running after omnibuses for halfpence; tempted too often by some mean conductor showing the boy "a copper," and after he had run a good mile after it, returning it again to his own pocket.

The lad was fond of horses, as all gipsies are, and I used to meet him in the most out-of-the-way places, ready to hold mine, if I only alighted for a few minutes; and I dare say, if the truth were known, there was some kind of freemasonry betwixt him and Harry, who was anxious that he should be rescued from the streets; so I caught him, wild as he was, and putting a foot-board and a couple of strong straps behind the gig for him to dance upon and hold on by, made him my little tiger.

The vagabond could drive, too, having made friends with no end of cabmen through his cleverness in throwing "coach-wheels," who had taken him on their boxes and trusted him to drive to the stables and back while they "did a drain or two."

Though such a mite of a fellow, I could trust him with my horse and gig, for there was a grip like spring-wire in those little thin boney arms, and he was as faithful to me as a good dog. I called him Nip.

I trusted him to drive the gig home from the Brighton station, told him where to draw in and wait our return in the evening, and felt as sure of finding him on the spot at the appointed time as I did of finding the clock overhead in its place.

We had a compartment in the comfortable railway carriage to ourselves, and like travellers who know that they are bound to travel a long way together, we made ourselves very agreeable to each other; for had we not pledged ourselves never to

separate until death parted us? Until that day came, when with bowed head and sorrowing heart she would either follow me to the grave, or I should go a little way behind her, soon to be carried to where she would be waiting to receive me.

Was it not strange that with her beside me, and her hand in mine, these thoughts should occupy my mind, and keep me silent for some time; called up only through looking out of the carriage window, and seeing a quiet country churchyard, where the rich and the poor slept together under the shadow of the overhanging trees that swept silently across their graves.

As the carriages rattled along, I thought if those who had long slept there could awake and see the rapid engine tearing onward with its living freight at such a speed as they had never heard of any human being moving under, except the jockey who rode the renowned Eclipse, and that for but a minute or two, they would fancy that they had opened their eyes on a new world, full of such wonders as they had never dreamed of.

The slow moving market-boat, often hauled by men, the ponderous stage-waggon, which you could hardly see move at all, when in the distance, unless you kept your eye on some landmark that it was passing, the weekly carrier's tilted cart, were the only conveyances for the poor who could not afford to pay coach-fare.

The wind blew rather fresh from the sea, and as we sat facing it with the windows open, we both smelt the fresh ocean-air some quarter of an hour before we reached Brighton. When the wind has blown from the same quarter, and I've been travelling with friends in the same direction, very few caught that sharp refreshing pungency in the air so soon as I did, and I have since thought that this quick sense of smell was owing to my having been so much among flowers, the perfume of

"Looking out over the sea." Chap. 24, p. 249.

which I could readily distinguish in the dark, as my sister and Mary Rose have often proved by bringing in one of every scented plant we grew when the room was so dark I couldn't even see a white flower.

We were rather fortunate in meeting with my friend, Lieutenant Lorrimer, on the parade, as some friends he had been staying with were about to return to town that very evening, and the apartments they had been occupying would suit us. We went on at once and secured the rooms, my friend's introduction being sufficient to procure more than ordinary attention from the landlady, who was an officer's widow, her husband having fallen in the Crimea. The apartments were all that could be desired, and the attendants were model servants; even before we left, a letter arrived by the afternoon post bespeaking the lodgings, so that we were only just in time.

We had made up our minds to have a nice little dinner to ourselves, while looking out over the sea, in some first-class hotel, and had been very merry together as to what it should consist of, for there is but little choice at the close of summer, when salmon is out of season, and lamb has grown into mutton; so as it was too hot for soup, and too early for game, and as we did not well know what to order, we had decided upon taking "pot-luck," simply ordering a "nice dinner for two," having a sail out for an hour while it was ready, then coming back with the best "sea-appetite" we could find. But our plans were defeated through meeting with Lorrimer, for as it was their last day in Brighton, we must dine with his friends, and as I had met the gentleman several times, and the lady took a great fancy to Mary, we were compelled to surrender, for which I was not sorry, as I saw how well a dinner could be served up in a Brighton boarding-house under the superintendence of a

lady, for such the landlady really was, being allied to an old and distinguished family. No doubt there was a little extra preparation on our account and my friend Lorrimer's, for Mivart could not have done the thing more handsomely.

I could hot help asking myself, while walking out with my friend the Lieutenant, what I should do if I had to spend a month in keeping holiday at Brighton. I was no horseman, therefore could not enjoy a gallop on the Downs; I could not go out sailing all day, though I might find a little amusement and instruction in collecting and examining sea-weeds. I might write and read, and should never grow weary of the latter, so many thousands of works as there were that I longed to become acquainted with. "But if I had no taste for books, how should I spend my time?" I asked Lorrimer.

"I'll tell you how some young gentlemen I have known manage to kill the time," he said. "They get up in the morning and bathe; then they have breakfast, which, if you have shrimps, may be prolonged for an hour or two; then they go out for a lounge, to see what may be seen, having first yawned over the morning paper. They return and have luncheon, which they would be all the better without, as it only spoils their dinner; then they have a walk or a ride, and so "moon" about with cigars and papers until dinner-time; they make a very long dinner hour, and after that it is very difficult to tell you what they do, until tea-time, which is generally taken rather late. Some have supper, then end by what they call "making a night of it," which too often they feel the unpleasant effects of on the following morning."

"It would suit me very well for two or three days," I said, "but accustomed to stirring about in business, as I have been

all my life, I think after that time I should be weary of idling. The ladies and the children, and old people who require air and rest, are most at home at the sea-side, for the ladies have always something at hand to employ themselves upon, and as for the children, where there is sand to dig, and shells to pick up, and plenty of water to splash about in, they find happiness enough. For the old, it is a fitting resting-place, to sit and look at that mysterious boundary, where it is hard to distinguish sky from water, sea from cloud, earth from heaven; it is like peeping at the confines of a new and unknown world, and well calculated to prepare them for that change which they know must soon take place; for it is not difficult to fancy that yonder long stretch of sunlight, which extends so far as to be lost to the eye, is a golden pathway, leading to the gates of heaven."

The wind, which blew freshly in the morning, had now subsided, and the sea was almost as smooth as glass, and while I stood looking at it, I thought how strange and mysterious that unseen power is, which lashes it into a storm. We feel, and hear, yet cannot see it; it is the only invisible arm that can strike down the giant oak, that can take the mountain waves by their sea-green hair and dash them against the rocks, while the works of man are almost powerless before it. What victims it devours every year! What hidden mysteries it rolls over! Seven mile soundings have been taken, and no bottom reached, and full six miles of that are liquid darkness, the blackness of ink. Is there any life there? What mountain peak rises naked and abrupt above the surrounding country, so high as that dreadful midnight darkness goes sheer down?

So I stood dreaming in silence, looking at the sea, until

Lorrimer took out his watch, and said the time was drawing on when the train would start for London.

During our absence the landlady had taken kindly to Mary, and wanted to persuade her to remain, as it would save her from the fatigue of two journeys. For my part, I had no objection to make, and as for the packing of her things, Betty and her mother could see to those; and I thought it would look more like home to have her there to receive us on the following day, and to have dinner prepared against her father and mother's arrival; and more than all that, she would become more intimate with the landlady and the ways of the house, if left by herself: I persuaded her to remain behind.

So it was decided, and we were all ready to depart, everything on, and the luggage of our new friends long before sent away, when, after speaking a few words to the landlady, I turned round to bid Mary farewell until the morrow, and saw the tears in her eyes. I stood amazed for a moment, then said, "Come then, put your things on;" and I question if the time-piece on the mantel-piece had beaten sixty seconds, before she was again at my side, her arm in mine, ready to return home.

"I like her the better for it," said the landlady, with a pleasant smile, after Mary had kissed her.

"I should never have slept a wink all night, George, if you had left me here by myself, much as I like the lady of the house, and my absence would have made both father and mother uneasy."

"You know it was me you couldn't bear to be separated from," I said, and she gave my hair a lug, and blushed, as if ashamed of the truth.

Nip and the gig were at the station ready to receive us, and

the horse gave me the usual token of recognition, which was rubbing his head against me when I spoke to him.

I saw that my friend Lorrimer wanted to speak to me before parting, and fancied he intended doing so while we were looking over the sea a few hours before, and I had seated Mary in the gig before he "screwed his courage" high enough to utter what he wanted to say. He beckoned me with his finger beyond her hearing, and taking my hand said, "I wish, George, you would call on Lily, and tell her you are engaged to Miss Rose, and, while parting from her, speak a word or two for me; both her father and mother wish it, for she would be more influenced by you than anybody else, my sister has told me so, and they keep but few secrets from one another. You know Lily, perhaps, better than any of us, and she says, what you advise her to do she will do, as you will propose nothing to her but what is for her good."

"As so many of you wish it," I said, "I will see her, though it will be rather a painful interview, for take away Mary Rose, and I know no one beside I am so attached to as pretty Golden Hair. But I will do my duty, never fear."

We shook hands, and I knew by his firm pressure that he placed his happiness in my charge, without doubt or fear.

Mr. and Mrs. Rose were waiting tea for us, and would have waited until midnight, I do believe, if we had not arrived before that time.

I left Mary to tell her father and mother all about the nice apartments, and the nice dinner, and the nice landlady, who was a perfect lady, while, like a good boy, I minded my muffins and tea, for their servant Betty was a first-rate muffin-

maker, and spared neither milk nor eggs; and I think the happy young lady's tongue kept running on for a good half-hour without ceasing, for she had been in every room in the large house, while I and Lorrimer were smoking our cigars by the sea-side.

I should have slept easier after sniffing the sea-breeze, and passing the day so comfortably, had it not been for the request of my friend; for somehow I felt that I could not have a parting interview with Golden Hair without giving and receiving pain; and I who, when digging, would pick up a worm to save it from the stroke of the spade, would more readily suffer pain at any time than inflict it on others.

A green country churchyard.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW I SET A TRAP TO CATCH LILY FOR LORRIMER.

THE next day I accompanied Mr. Rose and his family to Brighton, saw them comfortably settled in their new lodgings, and returned the same night by the last train, as several matters of importance had to be seen after on Saturday morning, besides the men's wages. I promised before leaving my old friend, that I would run down again by the Saturday night train, and remain until Monday morning, and that during my absence

Harry should remain in charge of the house, along with the servant Betty, my sister Jane staying in the day time, as it was necessary some one should then be there, while they were away, to see persons who called on business. This my sister could do, besides keeping minutes of such things as must come under my superintendence.

I need not dwell upon my journeys up and down the line, nor the excellent meals that were prepared on my arrival, for under the watchful and experienced eye of the landlady appeared the most dainty dishes, and Mary Rose, through her instructions, learnt to concoct many a curious custard, tart, pudding, and cake, which she was never able to make before.

They all took such a liking to the lady of the house, that they would not sit down to a meal without her, and tears stood in the landlady's eyes one evening when I was going to start for London, as she shook hands with me, and said, "I have had many ladies and gentlemen as lodgers, some of them people of title, but never before such kind, warm-hearted, homely people as your friends; I wish Mary were my daughter."

One thing connected with Brighton I looked upon in disgust, and that was the low, coarse-minded fellows—wearing, only to disgrace it, the attire of gentlemen—who were loitering and peeping about the ladies' bathing machines, and whom I put down as bastards, who had neither mothers nor sisters that they knew of; for no one linked by kindred ties to respectable females, and possessing the right feelings of a man, would so dishonour his manhood.

They had been at Brighton about a week when I received a note from my captain, for I had been too occupied to even put in an appearance at head-quarters, and had got Lieutenant

Lorrimer to do duty for me, thereby throwing him in close contact with Lily. I answered the Captain's note by calling in the evening and taking tea with the family. Pretty Golden Hair was far from cheerful, as I knew through her unusual silence. This I resolved to break through at once, and that in the presence of her parents, which I thought would be much better than "having it out" with her if left to ourselves. "On this hint I spake."

"Come, Lily, brighten up a bit," I said, "and don't cause us to wish that we had given you some other pet name than that of Merry Bird, as well as Golden Hair. You used to be always either chirruping or singing; you must put on your brightest looks, for Mary wishes you to be one of her bridesmaids when we are married."

"When will that be?" she asked, with a faint smile. "As soon as they return from Brighton," I answered. "You always liked Mary, and will be one of her pretty bridesmaids; I'm sure I know she will be happy to do the same for you, when the time arrives, but you are too young at present."

"Yes, I will be one of her bridesmaids, as you wish me," she said, "as your sister is to be the other. May I not, mother?"

"Yes, my dear, and you shall have a beautiful new dress for the occasion," replied her mother, "and Jane shall have another; you shall select them both."

She thanked her mother, and seemed to be falling back upon her former silence, when I said, looking at the Captain, "Could you not spare her for a week, to keep company with Mary at Brighton? The sea air would do her good, and I am sure she will be made very comfortable."

The Captain looked at his wife as if for an answer, and the

lady said, "If you would like to go, Lily, we will not only spare you, but run down for a day, to bring you back with us. Will you go, dear?"

"Yes, I think I will, a change may do me good," Golden Hair said very quietly. "When shall I go?" and she looked at me.

It was arranged that I should call for her on the following evening, early enough for her to reach Brighton in time for tea; and I wrote a note at once, which Mary would receive by the morning post, apprising her of Lily's visit.

It was at Mary's suggestion that I invited Golden Hair down, for I got my sister to tell her all that had transpired in relation to Lily; and Mary's first wish was to become her friend, "for I think a more intimate acquaintanceship," she said to my sister, "is the surest cure for jealousy, as you then see all that goes on, as I will trust him with Golden Hair as much as he likes in my presence, and then there will be no excuse for any tittle-tattle, or calling me the watching dragon, as some are called. I don't wonder at her liking George, so many times as he took the blame on himself for what she had done, when a girl, to get her out of a scrape."

My sister told me all this, for she had been down to Brighton; and when I went again Mary said to me, "Your sister will give you a message from me to your pretty blue-eyed, golden-haired doll, George, and if she accepts it graciously you can invite her down here for a week, if she'll pare her nails before she comes, and promise not to scratch me; and then your friend Lorrimer can run down with you now and then, and we needn't keep too close to them while walking on the beach, you know; and I'll trust you with her when we are out now and then, and you shall heal up her dear little heart by degrees; and if I

should happen to take a liking to the Lieutenant, why, you know it will make your pet all the happier, and you too, I dare say, if the truth were known."

The last few words were good-natured banter; but the notion of bringing my friend Lorrimer down was a great stroke of policy, though I had no doubt my sister had sat at the council board where the idea originated.

As they had laid their little plot, I also laid mine, writing to the Lieutenant, and telling him to be on the look out at the Brighton station, and get into the same compartment as soon as he saw us enter the railway carriage, for I thought it as well not to give pretty Golden Hair a chance of alluding to what had been; for the tears and pleadings of a beautiful young lady that you have a great liking for are strong assailants better kept at bay if possible, lest you should come to a conflict in which it would be necessary to "take up arms against a sea of troubles."

All was done as I desired. I drove her to the station, accompanied by Nip; she did say when she was seated, "Oh, George, I was afraid you would never drive me in this dear old gig again;" but as Nip's sharp ears were quite as close to her as mine, as he stood swinging behind, no more was said.

I saw Lorrimer was on the look out, though he did not catch the eye of Lily, and in less than a minute he was in the carriage with us, and I am sorry to add, we both pretended to be equally surprised at what we were deceitful enough to call an unexpected pleasure.

Golden Hair smiled on him very pleasantly, and I am quite sure believed that we had met by chance, though both myself and friend felt a sharpish twinge of conscience, as was seen by the pains we took to show that such meetings frequently hap-

pened, which is a truth, though we said it to gild over a falsehood. But such conversation served to pass the time, as we got from friends meeting at railways to ships and far-away countries, even in the Pyramids of Egypt; for where had not friends met unexpectedly at one time or another? Of course I invited him to tea with us, and we had a drive afterwards to a neighbouring village, and greatly admired the picturesque church and the green country churchyard.

That evening, after a late supper, when Mr. and Mrs. Rose had retired, we sat conversing on regimental matters, in which the name of our Captain came up, and the way in which the Lieutenant spoke of his good qualities called up an approving light in Lily's blue eyes, and caused her to shake his hand heartily at parting for the night.

Lorrimer would have said just the same had not Golden Hair been present, and more, I believe, in his praise. It was the right way to Lily's heart, and I am sure Mary thought so too, from her way of looking at me.

Lorrimer was the gentlest of gentlemen I had ever met with; he was a favourite with everybody; nothing ever ruffled his tranquil temper, and I felt sure that he would succeed in winning the affection of Lily, because he loved her, while I never entertained any other feeling for her than I should have done had she been my dear little sister; and if I ever thought differently, it was in some wavering light, when the image of Mary Rose was not clearly revealed, for on Mary my boyish heart had cast anchor long before I knew that I was drifting into love.

The interest she took in me from the first, never seeming so happy as when she was doing me some service, drew me to her, strengthening friendship with gratitude; and when I saw

how she devoted herself to her father's interests, never murmuring, never repining, however much she might have to do, I thought to myself, so true and faithful a daughter would be a dear companion to travel through life with, and would remain faithful to the end.

It had grieved me to see the empty-headed "fast" young gentlemen who swarmed about her like flies round a jar of honey, when she went to the flower shows and different exhibitions, at a time when I, a poor striving florist, could not spare money enough to purchase a suit of clothes to render me admissible into what was considered the select circles.

I remembered well how I used to shrink in the background, and feel ashamed when she called me forward to look at some flower which she was familiar with, and I had never before seen; she beautifully dressed, and I in my homely boyish attire, looking like what I was, a hard-working gardener, while she, with her graceful motion and perfect figure, bore nature's stamp of lady, no matter what she wore.

All were not "swells" and "fast" young gentlemen who paid their court to Mary Rose, for some few were fine manly, sensible fellows, for whom I had a great liking, and thought much worthier of her notice than I was ever likely to be.

It was a busy day for the Brighton landlady when the Captain and Lily's mother came down, and were met by us all at the railway station, for Mr. Rose, as soon as he gave up his strong sherry and took to a moderate allowance of claret, was on his feet again, and looked as hearty as ever.

Both her father and mother smiled pleasantly when they saw Golden Hair hanging on the arm of Lieutenant Lorrimer, and when the Captain alighted, and found an opportunity of speaking to me privately, he said, "George, you are a good

general, and have manœuvred capitally; I like this change in the front;" and he looked in the direction of Lily and her lover.

Mr. Rose had ordered the best dinner that could be procured, and I had brought down by train some of his choicest wine a week before, to "give it time to settle after the shaking it would get," as he said.

I had also met my old friend the Director on the parade, and invited him to dinner, for he was a merry gentleman, and Mr. Rose took a liking to him at once. He had been of great service to me, as I have before shown, and it was through him that my father regained possession of his garden.

He kept us all alive with his railway anecdotes, misreadings of telegrams, and mistakes in carriages, getting out at wrong stations, and getting in on wrong lines, stopping for refreshings, and rushing into the first carriage they came to, then finding their mistake out when it was too late and the train in motion; how he, on one occasion, was left in a compartment with three squalling children, while the father and mother were running half frantic along the platform past which the engine shot, and how he good-naturedly got out at the next station and telegraphed for the parents to be sent on by a special train, and so dried up all tears in the course of half-an-hour.

He told us of a baby having been left asleep on the cushion of a first-class carriage, the mother getting out and thinking that the nurse had it in her arms, while the nurse, laden with luggage, felt sure that the aunt would carry it, and that by the time they had found out that the infant was left behind, the train had started; how the nurse was placed on an engine, and went flying along without any carriage, and overtook the

train at the next station, and, sitting on the coke, was back again in a few minutes, neither of them the worse for their ride, though their faces were begrimed with the soot.

He also told us of the old woman who, when she arrived in London, missed her umbrella, which she remembered rearing up beside her while taking her ticket at York, and how she went into the telegraph department, and asked the clerk to send for it while she waited; that one of the guards who knew the old lady had brought up the umbrella, and was searching for her, to return it, when the clerk saw him at the door, and giving him a knowing wink, pretended to send off a telegram to York, saying, while he touched the keys without pressing them, "I've sent for it, mother," then, bending his ear down to the instrument, added, "They're sending it up; it will be here in about a minute," when the guard, who was laughing at the door, walked in and presented her with the umbrella, at which she began to pat the hooked handle for not coming off while it travelled all those scores of miles along the wires in less than no time. The Director made himself very agreeable to our landlady, who, if she made no other advance, laughed heartily at his anecdotes.

Neither the Captain nor his family could be permitted to return to town that night, so a telegram was sent instead, and we enjoyed ourselves until past midnight, Golden Hair and Mary entertaining us at intervals with singing and music, in which the accomplished Lieutenant joined: another proof how well he and Lily were adapted for each other, for I soon found that in most intellectual amusements they had a similar taste.

Business required me to arrive in town by an early train, so that, with the exception of Mary, who breakfasted with me,

I did not see any of our visitors again until the evening, Mary also having run up with me, so that Jane might have a day or two by the sea-side while we kept house.

There can be no better "breaking in" than that of two young people sitting down to take their meals together who are soon to be fellow-boarders for life—until that dark day comes when the table is only spread for one!

River front of the old house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A TALK ABOUT OLD TIMES, AND A LITTLE DINNER.

It was soon after his return from the sea-side that Mr. Rose proposed I should drive him and my father over his last great work,—the new park,—which had been laid out on that wide, low, swampy waste where my gipsy boy Harry was stopped and robbed of the money he was bringing me to pay the men's wages. As the whole neighbourhood had been familiar to

them both ever since they were boys, and they had also a remembrance of what their fathers had described it as being when they were young, together with some recollection of what they had heard of the state of the locality in the time of their grandfathers, I felt a great interest in accompanying them and listening to their old-world gossip.

When we had driven up and alighted at the river-side entrance of the new park, Mr. Rose, pointing down from the high embankment, said to my father, "Do you remember the old public-house that stood here, with what was called the tea-gardens behind and on each side of it?"

"Quite well," replied my father; "and how each section was divided by privet-hedges and green stagnant ditches, and what a feeling of dampness and smell of mould, fungi, and decay there was about the whole place, varied only by the smouldering coils of burning tow which were laid on the tables, and which we blew into a blaze when we wanted to light our pipes, as they were placed there for that purpose, there being no lucifer matches in those days."

"I remember the tow-lights," said Mr. Rose, "and also bringing a girl-sweetheart and having tea, before the down was on my chin; that the tea was black and the water just warm, and that, instead of drinking it, I sat fishing out the little tadpoles with my spoon, for they had filled the kettle out of the ditch, which was full of spawn and young frogs, and more than once when the kettle-lid has been left off, has a large frog got in, and having been well boiled, has given such a flavour to the tea as you might fancy eel-pie would have if you used sugar instead of savouring it with salt and pepper."

"Yet the river-front of the old house was very picturesque," said my father, "and artists used to come and sketch it for the

beauty of the old timber-work, and I used to often think it must have been built about the same time as those old timbered tenements—which I have a water-colour drawing of—that stood in my grandfather's time on Daisy Field Farm. The only thing I regret your having removed to make this beautiful new park is that quaint old house which, they say, Charles I. sent his children to pass two or three summers in when they were little, and that he and their mother used often to come and visit them while here in their royal barge. As for the tea-gardens behind, they were a nuisance, and I'm very glad you swept them away, with all their frogs and snails."

"I dare say it was a pretty place enough in those far-back times, when that old-timbered house was at its best," said Mr. Rose, "though the low-lying ground beyond it must, I imagine, always have been damp and unhealthy. Mist and fog rose there in my young days, when it was seen nowhere else in the neighbourhood. There was no comfort about the place, though it was so much frequented by people who fancied they got a mouthful of fresh air when they came here. The beer was hard, the cheese harder, the bread stale, and yet those who came here with their children would eat and drink as if they were famished, and in spite of the fogs, mists, and evil smells, enjoy such food and drink ten times more than they would the wholesome refreshment they had left at home."

"It was not the refreshment," replied my father, "but the love of sitting down amid something that looked green and pretty; and I am sure it must afford you greater pleasure to have laid out this beautiful park for the people than it would have done to have built whole rows of streets. You have filled up the stagnant ditches, sweetened the air with

thousands of trees, shrubs, and flowers, and made pleasant walks where, in moist weather, we could not move without sinking ancle-deep in the spongy soil. You have done more good than a thousand doctors."

"Well, it's more in my line to make openings to let in the blessed air of heaven, than it is to brick it out," said Mr. Rose, with a smile, "and I am sure the atmosphere must be purer where trees wave and flowers blow, than it is where only chimneys smoke; don't you think so, George?"

"I know we found it very difficult to get a flower to bloom at all, unless in the greenhouse," I said, "when they kept building every year nearer to my father's garden; and it will be the same in time with the new parks; houses will be built all round them, and let all the more readily through being so near to these pleasant places, until by degrees this open space is penned in with streets, and the smoke from thousands of chimneys will vitiate the air, and prevent all but the very hardiest of plants from blooming; and there is no help for it."

"That time you may even live to see, George," said my father, "but never more such changes as have taken place since the days of my grandfather. Picture Kennington Common, now called 'The Park,' being little more than a century ago the place of execution for Surrey; some of the rebels suffered there in 1746; and I have heard my father say, when he was a boy, part of the palace in which the Black Prince resided was standing at the entrance of what is now Park Place, Kennington Cross; that it was called the Long Barn, and was not entirely pulled down until 1795. Part of the old stables may still be seen in the rear of the 'Black Prince' public-house; they are built of flint and stone. Along there

was the great highway to Westminster, crossing the Thames at Lambeth Palace stairs, and landing at the Horseferry Road. Our old garden was then in the fields, and, no doubt, the wooden mill stood on what is now Hill Street, then a portion of Dairy Field Farm."

"There have been a many changes within this last century," said Mr. Rose. "I have heard my father say, that in his father's time the grandest old manor-house in the neighbourhood of London was at Stockwell; that it was so old nothing was known of its origin, and that a gentleman named Barrett, who made money through Vauxhall Gardens, purchased the ancient mansion, pulled it down, and built the house on it now standing. In those days Clapham Common was a morass, almost impassable after rain, and messages were carried across by men who walked in stilts; there are several sheets of water on it still."

Having read Pepys' Diary, I was able to throw a little light on the antiquity of Vauxhall Gardens as a place of amusement, as the pleasing old gossip has described the spot, calling it Foxhall, and proving that it was popular long before the time of Queen Anne, and very probably as far back as the reign of James I. I, however, learnt more about the changes that have taken place in Lambeth during this last century while listening to my father and Mr. Rose than I knew before. I also could look over the new park with a feeling of pleasure, for many a little hint of mine had been carried out, such as throwing up a hillock here and there, where before there was a bog, carrying a watercourse beside it, and planting it with shrubs and trees for the birds to build and sing in. Many a comfortable seat had also been placed in picturesque spots of my selection, where sudden turnings opened out into smooth expanses of

greensward, banked with flowers and sheltered by evergreens, or beside sheets of water that gave eyes to the landscape, which mirrored the sky, and threw back the golden sunlight, and spread out like sheets of silver beneath the softer light of the moon.

Many of the trees were planted out at a great cost, as some of them were very large, and could only be moved one at a time with great care and much difficulty, and that on a frame made purposely to rest on large timber-wains.

These trees were marked before removal, and planted true to the points of the compass, every branch and root pointing to the four quarters, as they did before removal, and the very soil made as much like that they had grown in as possible.

Money became the last consideration in comparison to that of keeping such costly trees alive, and we had very few failures, for we had clever men about us, who understood their work thoroughly. When the roots were bared, we had a rough sketch made of the position in which they lay, and marks on the trees by which to regulate all the long figures in our new star-shaped trenches; and many a young tree did we remove and keep alive, through the system we adopted, that was from twelve to twenty feet high.

We had the best machinery and plenty of hands, many of them men "to the manner born."

Gorse that grows on every wild waste in the country was difficult to preserve, and yet covered with golden bloom the next season, though it was so necessary to give a wildness to a few of our picturesque spots, especially one we called the Wilderness.

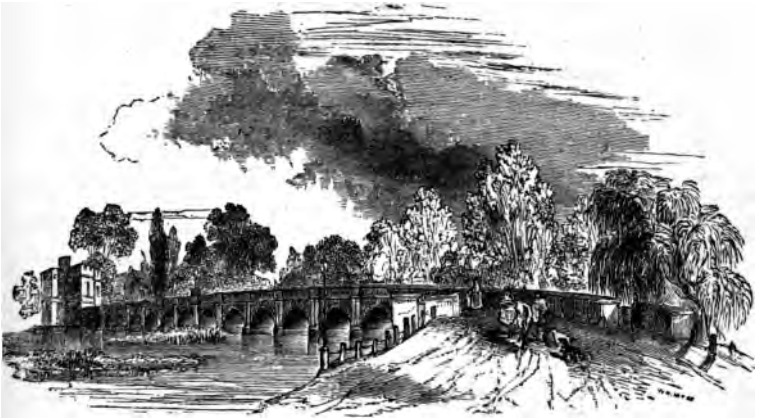
Whatever the ground might have been behind that old timbered tenement in the time of Charles, it never could have

resembled what we made it, unless all the roads had been sucked up in the swamp in which we had buried thousands of tons of hard rubbish to make our new foundation; having first laid down a tramway for our trucks to run upon. From one steep railway cutting a few miles out we had carried away earth enough to raise a hill that would have overlooked London, had it been shot down on one base. That formed our great central roads through the swamp, made firm enough for a railway embankment.

We had ordered dinner, the day before, at the Gardeners' Arms, near the new park, where it will be remembered I paid the workmen on the day of the robbery; and very merry and comfortable we were while talking about old times, for Mr. Rose had sent down a bottle or two of his nutty old sherry and beeswing port; and when you held the bottle up between the eye and the light, it was like looking through a ruby filled with broken flakes of amber. How it made them both talk!

While listening to them, I thought how few men could look back on their past lives with more pleasure and satisfaction than my father and Mr. Rose. What though the greater portion of my dear father's life had been spent in hard work and comparative poverty, he had borne it all contentedly, and never repined so long as he was blessed with health; and it was pleasant to hear him tell Mr. Rose that he believed his hard fare and harder work had saved him from those afflictions which success and good living had brought on our wealthy friend.

As he drank my health and happiness—though his voice trembled and there was a tear in his eye—it was very pleasant to hear my father say, as he took my hand, "Through him I have no occasion to do another hand-stir of work while I live,



We went back all the way across that long bridge.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RETROSPECTIVE.

My mother had expressed a wish that before I went to reside at my new home—as she called Mr. Rose's residence—I should come and spend a good long evening with them at our dear old cottage, and talk about old times. "I should never think of laying such a claim to you, when you are another's," she said; "and perhaps such a chance may never occur again. I only want you, and Jane, and father; and to see you sitting in the same places, and to hear you talking as we used to talk, while wondering if better times would ever come—without repining because they had not then arrived."

When I look back and consider what my father's garden was when I was a boy, and what it is now, I sigh for the past, and

think how few boys found more to amuse and interest them than I did, especially while watching the habits of the birds before so many houses were built up around us.

As I have said before, my father's garden was but little more than a mile from either London Bridge, or Vauxhall, or any of the bridges that span the Thames between the two—and was visited by a great number of birds in winter. We let the groundsel and chickweed under the south wall run to seed year after year, to tempt them, so that one or both were in flower and seed from February to November, unless the season was very severe.

The tall privet hedge was also black with berries all the year round: as the old ones hung on the sprays until the new ones were nearly ripe. Wrens, robins, finches, titmice, and even the wagtail, that came picking and strutting round the fountain, were among the chief of our winter visitors, for the sparrows we had with us always.

Year after year a blackbird used to build, and sing, and rear its young with only the space of a garden between us. All the thickly-clustered houses that hemmed in the open space in which we resided were filled with the music of the blackbird in spring.

Robins came into our kitchen, and we hardly ever stirred out in winter without startling the beautifully-coloured gold-finches. As for the wrens, they were sticking up their tiny tails everywhere.

It is not so now; for while I write new houses are creeping up close to the old, high garden-wall at the back of us, which has stood for full a century. This and the huge, square, brick pillars, on which the quaintly-wrought iron gates swung in former times, together with our cottage, are all that remain of

the past, for behind us the old neighbourhood is unaltered. And in this thick old wall—every brick of which may be powdered into dust between the thumb and finger—thousands of insects are concealed that furnish the birds with many a meal in winter, for they still fly about and peep into the holes and crevices, and hang flattened against the brickwork all day long. We never allowed any to be captured.

A thick, low-branched, broad-spreading japonica, that sends out thorns sharp as needles, and is hung with fiery blossoms, before the leaves are grown, in early spring, is still the favourite playground of the little brown titmice. It is overhung by a plum-tree, both within a few feet of the window. Here they still come to play in winter for the hour together, as they always find food under the thorny japonica. Their favourite game is to chase one another "up and down stairs," the interlacing and steplike branches of the shrub being the staircase. Our old cat, Neverfear—so called for his daring performance on the branches, never caring how high he climbed nor how low the sprays bent beneath him, as he always alighted on his feet when he fell—was confined within doors—when we could catch him —while the titmice went through their little performance. He was, however, allowed to occupy a chair by the window, on which he reared up and looked at the birds, swearing awfully, and switching his tail to and fro angrily all the time he watched them. Now and then he escaped, when the door was opened, and spoilt their pretty game of "catch me who can," for they scampered off, like a parcel of children who are in mischief at the sight of a policeman, the instant they saw the old cat.

As for the robins and wrens, they got on the highest stems that shot out of the broad old holly hedge, when they saw him, well knowing that he would not follow them there, as there

were myriads of sharp spikes on the armed holly-leaves ever ready to run into his feet.

Sometimes Neverfear brought in a poor little palpitating bird, and looked up at us as if he expected to be stroked for so savage an outrage; then my dear sister Jane would take it away from him and give him a "good talking to," and threaten that he should have no supper. But, somehow, by rubbing against her, purring, and climbing up her back to sit on her shoulder, he managed to get into favour again; and when I used to see him lying coiled up on her knee just before bed-time, I knew that he had been forgiven, and had had his supper.

For the wagtail there was always something to be found about the fountain under the pump, as the ice was broken every morning, for the birds to drink, and the water fell over the brim when it was full, making the ground moist; and there the black winter gnats indulged in their airy dance if there was only a gleam of sunshine that lasted for a few minutes. The wagtail used to go striding about, as if he timed his footsteps to the wagging of his beautiful long tail; for he never hops as if his legs were tied together, as many birds do, but puts his "best foot foremost," like the gentlemanly bird he is, though his colour is like that of the mischief-loving magpie, who remains with us all the year round.

We had a great number of starlings at times about the ground, and very pretty they looked with their beautifully-marked plumage; and there is something very peculiar in that long, clear whistle, which is heard every minute or so while they remain, and seems to be sounded as the signal of danger and caution.

As for sparrows—like mice, they follow man wherever he goes. They were our greatest plague. They ate up at times

nearly all the early seeds we sowed in February; they began with the peas the very instant they were out of the ground. We caught them thieving in winter, and when we drove them off the seed-beds they flew no further than the old wall behind our cottage, where they perched all of a row, and were down again and busy plundering before we passed under the elder-bower. They are born thieves, and I do believe often fight in winter only to keep themselves warm.

Nor do they mind taking possession of one another's nests. When the rightful occupier returns, the sparrow in possession pokes out his head from under the eaves and pecks at him; if that does not drive him away the intruder turns out, and then they have to fight for it; and a pretty row they make while they fight—no doubt calling one another all the bad names they "can lay their tongues to." Sometimes one sparrow gave another such a thrashing, that we did not see the beaten one for a day or two, and had no doubt that he was confined to his bed under the eaves. I used to watch them for hours.

The little wrens used to sit in the hedge, huddled up like balls of feathers on a cold day, and, but for their tiny tails sticking out, would seem quite round. Then there was ever heard that low, pleasing note, as if they were talking to themselves while perking their heads aside, and stopping every now and then for a moment or two, as if considering whether they had hunted the spray well from which they had just stepped down, or left anything on it that was worth while going back again for.

The golden-crested wren never came to us, though he visited the gardens about Camberwell and Dulwich in winter. He is the very smallest of all our British birds, and a perfect beauty he is, too, with his orange-coloured crest blowing all

about his head on a windy day, like the long feathers in a lady's bonnet. I used to often see him in the grounds about the Reformatory. He likes to go hopping and pecking about in the shrubberies among the evergreens in winter, but never approaches near our towns or villages at any other season of the year; and, though he weighs but eighty grains, and his body is very little larger than some of our big humble-bees, he remains with us all the year round, even if the winter be cold enough to kill him, as if he preferred laying down his little bones in his native land to carrying them over the sea, as so many of our larger birds do. Linnets, which are such favourite cage-prisoners, never leave us, though they shift their quarters to every point of the island in winter, the young birds being generally together, and the old ones keeping in flocks. In winter we had chaffinches in our garden, so clean, that when they rose suddenly the pure white of their feathers was almost as startling as a flash of lightning. There is a neatness about their plumage which seems, compared with the dirty sparrows, as if they prided themselves in keeping their feathers clean, and were always fit to be seen at any time. We frequently startled them from the celery trenches, where the earth was oftentimes disturbed at mid-winter. Some say the females migrate, while the males remain behind; but this has not been proved; and it is common among the finches for the sexes to divide in winter, and fly in separate flocks, shifting about from one part of our island to another; and this cannot be called migration, as the meaning is understood by naturalists.

The blackbird, thrush, and magpie never leave us, and may frequently be seen somewhere near to our habitations in winter, though the magpie seldom visited my father's garden. Like the raven and rook, they build very early—often

long before there are any signs of the return of spring about the fields and the hedgerows. I soon found it is difficult to distinguish the male blackbird from the female until the second year, when the colour of his beak changes to that rich orange hue which caused our old poets to give him the name of Golden-bill. The blackbird and the thrush are the "ouzel-cock, merle, and mavis," of our old ballad poetry. Very often, if the winter was mild, I heard them sing at the beginning of February. There are records in our bird calendars of their songs having been heard at the close of January. I often found in my country journeys that I best caught the lowest and sweetest notes of the blackbird by concealing myself about a hundred feet from where the singer was stationed. The nightingale has nothing so delicious as that "dying strain," nor any other bird, I believe, except the little blackcap.

Many a shed, stable, and outhouse I had seen in my country journeys, while travelling for Mr. Rose, bore an evil name through the blackbird darting out suddenly in winter when disturbed while searching for food, and almost touching the intruder with his broad dusky wings as he swept past with a rush that was quite startling, even to a man of strong nerves. Many a servant-maid sent into the shed on some errand—for wood, or to search for hen's eggs—on a dark winter day has uttered a shrill scream like the sound of a trumpet, and rushed back into the farmhouse pale with fear, believing that she had seen something evil when the blackbird dashed by her.

Naturally he is fond of thickets and solitary places, loving to build in dark fir plantations, and it is rare to see more than two or three blackbirds together, for they never fly in flocks, like thrushes. He was always one of my favourites, for at one time he used to build his nest in my father's garden.

Summer and winter mine had been a pleasant life after I had to drive so much about the country for my employer, and as I was always fond of bird-nesting I could not help noticing what a many nests I saw in winter in spots where I searched for them in vain during the bird-nesting season, standing out so prominently in the bare bushes and hedges as to make me wonder that they could ever escape my eye.

But spring and summer had then drawn closely their green curtains over what are in winter

"Bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet bird sung;"

and, instead of noticing the old nests, I used to find the boys at the Reformatory busy trying to trap the birds with sieve, hair-noose, birdlime, springle, and brick-trap—the last generally the first boys set. I have often thought since what an old familiar picture that is in which two or three children are huddled together in some tumble-down shed, silently watching the sieve resting on the frail stick to which the string one of them holds is attached, their faces quite a study—expressing hope, fear, delight, and every other feeling caused by the near approach or withdrawing of the cautious birds, until at last there is a joyous cry, when the string is pulled and one is captured, to be free again the next minute through the impatient little hands that uplift the sieve. Then they generally end by blaming one another for allowing the fluttered prisoner to escape, all endeavouring to prove that it was not their fault, but never agreeing that each was alike guilty.

If my sister Jane was with me when I was driving out in the country on a fine winter's day, and saw a parcel of children trying to trap birds, she always made me pull up to watch them, for she said it reminded her of our own doings in

the dear old garden, when we were children. Mary Rose was also as fond as a boy of bird's-nesting, and was never without a lot of young birds to feed when I first knew her.

My father was always fond of birds, and he used to tell me that my grandfather remembered winters so severe, at the close of the last century, that nearly all the small birds perished. There were very few robins, wrens, linnets, or larks seen the following spring, and it was the end of summer before any young birds appeared. During those hard winters, my grandfather said, thousands of birds were picked up frozen to death, for the rivers were ice-bound, and it was so cold that the oil was frozen in the street-lamps, and they could not be lighted, so that a great portion of Lambeth and the suburbs were left in darkness. Freezing showers often fell, he said, during those hard old winters, coating everything they touched with clear bright ice, even the plumage of the birds; while the crimson holly-berries showed as if they were under glass, and the moss and lichen looked like jewels inclosed in crystal cases.

Though we have seldom such severe winters now, yet rarely does one pass without a frost lasting a week or two, and causing the ground to be as hard as stone.

How do the small birds live during these severe frosts, especially such as do not approach our homes in quest of food? This question had often occupied my mind when a boy, and after I had to go about the country so much for Mr. Rose. I came to this conclusion, that if the weather be so severe as to freeze the very life out of them, food can be found in abundance, and that for want of food alone they never perish.

There are millions of leaves under our broad old hawthorn hedges amid which insects are to be found in every stage of existence, and these the frost rarely reaches. In the woods,

beneath the close underwood overtopped by tall trees, it is the same; and if I forced my way through these close-woven barriers in winter and examined the leaves that lay so thickly at my feet I could see where the birds had been rummaging for food. Anybody can tell at a glance where the woodcock has been feeding, through his neat way of turning over the leaves, as he places one on his right and another on his left all the way he goes, never varying, and so makes himself quite an ornamental walk through his feeding-ground.

There are loads of berries on our privet and holly hedges, and that was what drew so many birds to my father's garden; there are also heps on our hawthorns and wild roses, besides a vast number of berry-bearing shrubs, which would make quite a catalogue of names. Under the gorse-bushes, that grow everywhere, are bushels of dry brown spines, which not only harbour insects but afford warm shelter to the birds, and are much frequented by our finches and linnets throughout the winter. Nor would a frost that locked up our navigable rivers penetrate very deep into these sheltered places, where the dry leaves lie layer above layer and never seem cold to the touch.

There are also myriads of insect-eggs glued, on tree, bush, or hedge, to foliage that never falls, and these the birds find out and devour; and well would it be if our gardeners looked a little more closely to the few leaves which remain on the fruit trees at the end of winter, as we always did, for they will be found covered with squares of insect-eggs, all glued so close together that it is difficult to force the point of a fine needle between the rows.

Amid mosses, among withered grass, in the open hollows of no end of weeds and reeds, in decayed wood, in the thatch of stacks, dwellings, and outhouses, insects are concealed, and

seeds are to be found which are only visible to the sharp sight of birds. We used to see them searching every hole and cranny in our old wall, holding on by their claws and the pressure of their tails, and fancy that the light of their sharp, flashing eyes must be as startling, to the poor insects they fasten upon, as the bull's-eye of a policeman's lantern is when turned upon a concealed felon. In farmyards, in places where flocks and herds are foddered, amid every variety of foliage and herbage, the birds find food that we know nothing of. Watch some bird busy pecking, then kneel down and examine the ground closely, and all you find will be grit, sand, and loam—to your eye nothing else is visible: what else might be revealed can only be discovered through the aid of a microscope. The sight of birds is marvellous. I have seen them drop down like a stone upon an insect from such a height as in my eye would have rendered it as indistinct as a grain of sand on a gravel walk.

I noticed that the birds pass two-thirds of their time in mid-winter in sleep, during which they require no food; while during the long days they are moving about for at least sixteen hours. The same Providence which causes so many created things to hibernate during the period they would perish for want of food if awake, also provides rest and sleep for the birds, during which they feel no hunger, and renders the few brief hours of winter daylight long enough to gather a sufficiency of food before retiring to roost. Some birds feed only in the night, and it is becoming a question whether some few that are classed as wildfowl migrate at all, as their nests have been found by our watercourses. All the plovers, god-wits, coots, water-rails, the sheldrake, and teal are met with in summer; and, though they may shift from place to place, most

of them, many think, remain with us all the year round, although they may move to every point of the compass.

Of all our birds, my sister Jane's favourite was the little robin. "He never leaves us," she used to say, "but still sings the old year out and the new year in, as his forefathers did, centuries before a Christmas carol was heard."

I always thought his beautiful red breast and the crimson holly-berries the only bits of warm colouring we see out of doors, when all the landscape is whitened with winter. He used to hop on our window-sill, leaving the print of his long claws in the snow, while he peeped through the pane with his bold black eyes, asking, in his way, for food, and will almost always enter the room, after a few visits, if he is treated kindly.

"He has such winning ways," Jane would say to my dear mother, "that all the children love him, and would not harm him for the world, were he caught and placed in their hands."

How delighted the children are to stand at the door and feed birds in winter, and I used to take a pleasure in watching their shy habits, as they drew nearer and nearer until they reached the furthermost crumb; then they opened their wings and were off in the twinkling of an eye! Many a time if I only threw up a few shovelfuls of earth in the garden, there the robin was rummaging among it to see what he could find, almost before my back was turned; or else I found him perched, impudently, on the handle of the spade I had left sticking in the mould, and singing away, with all his might, as if trying how much space he could fill with his song, since all the other birds were silent.

Neither did he forsake us for long together, either in spring or summer, except at breeding-time, but came every now and then, as if just to look on and say he had not forgotten us.

"When we sat down by the roadside." Chap. 27, p 285.

Then he came again to my father's garden at times with his little family about him in their juvenile suits; and I had to look very close at them to see a likeness, for they were sometimes too young to wear the red waistcoat—the proud crest of the house of Robin.

So, with my mind full of these pictures of the past, I went in the evening, and we sat down to one of the old bread-and-cheese suppers, with an onion to give it a strong relish, and a pint or two of porter, just as we used to sit down to our evening meal after a hard day's work in my father's garden, when we were barely able to live "from hand to mouth" by growing vegetables.

My father occupied his old arm-chair, sitting where he did when I was a mere boy, with only this difference, that there was not a trace of care on his beloved countenance, and Jane took my hand as of old, and kissed me very tenderly, when I told mother that "to make the picture perfect her cot ought to be wheeled in, and she made to rest upon it."

After conversing about many things, and how prosperous we had all been, my father said, "I well remember when you was a little boy, George, going with me into the country, when we sat down by the roadside after we went back all the way across that long bridge to look for the shilling I had lost. Then how cast down I felt, and how afraid I was we should have harder work than ever to get a bit of bread and pay our way when the railway labourers first began to cut up our dear old garden. I said to mother, 'how desolate it looks, we shall never do any good with the morsel of ground they have left us.' And it looked desolate enough to dishearten a braver man than I felt myself to be at that time, with the fences pulled down, and the shrubs stubbed up, and the roots we had dug out of the ground

lying about to dry before we could burn them; with piles of earth here and great holes there, into which the rain had fallen and lodged. It made my heart ache to look at such havoc, my lad, and I had to give a great gulp to swallow my rising grief, especially when I saw that they had cut through that beautiful lilac which only a few months before was covered with bloom—cut clean through it with their spades, scarcely leaving an inch of stem above the ground in which they had left the root. The next they stubbed up the next day, and threw it beside the branches, which would never bear those fragrant blossoms any more, for it was not the men's business to do any more than clear the ground, and they did what they were ordered to do in any way, and chopped through everything that stood before them."

"We never know what future provision Providence has in store for us, and it is better that it should be so," said my mother, rubbing her spectacles as if she could see the past better by doing so. "I do not know why I have never mentioned it before, but the lilac in what you call my garden, which you admired so much last spring, when it was covered with bloom, sprung from the old root, for which I made a hole after the workmen had stubbed it up, and put it in, never thinking at the time any more about it than wondering whether or not it would grow. This is the second year it has bloomed, and I am glad I saved it, father."

"I shall look on it with pleasure as long as it pleases God, in His great mercy, to spare me," said my father; "for it was seeing that lilac mangled in the way it was that drew forth the only tears I ever shed when they took away so much of our garden. I made a great trouble of it, and for two springs it has been a source of pleasure, without my knowing until now

that it ever caused me sorrow! We can never know what the morrow may bring forth."

"I never was of a despairing turn of mind," said my dear mother; "and you will all remember at the time how thankful I was that the railway company had left us our dear old cottage and a morsel of ground besides, when so many poor people had their houses pulled down, and were compelled to seek a shelter anywhere. Many of them were only weekly tenants, and what compensation could they claim? poor things! There was a talk about building small houses a little way out in the country, and taking poor people up and down for a penny a journey to their work and back again; they have built very few that I have heard of, and they can't, with all their money, build again the old places with which those who have been removed were so familiar—the old streets, every stone of which they knew, the old shops at which they so long dealt, and where, during illness or slackness of work, they obtained credit, in the hope of seeing better times; paying it off as they best could by a little a-week at a time. They had to go away to where there was no old kind neighbours to reach out a helping hand: a bit of washing or cooking for those who were unable to do it for themselves, getting the dear children off to school, so that the poor afflicted mother might have a little peace while they were away, for, thank God, the poor are ever ready to help the poor, giving one another pity and kindness, if even they have nothing else to give, and that, too, with all their hearts. But how could they ever hope to find old neighbours to do these things in the new cottages down the railway line, where they would all be strangers to one another, perhaps, and not having even the comfort of telling each other their troubles."

"They would be sure to get intimate enough after a little

while," said my sister; "like those who meet for the first time on the deck of a ship in which they are to become fellow voyagers; they soon make friends with one another, though they may be a little bit doubtful at first, as I was when George showed me his first cutting that had struck, and I could hardly believe that it would ever become a beautiful flower, it looked such a mite of a thing, with morsels of fibre shooting out like the ends of the coarse white thread I cut off on the under side when I have been working some pattern, and with bits of sand adhering to them. Many a time, George—for my back was too bad to get out then—did I send mother into the cutting-pit with bits of wood which I had marked, and sometimes, from the measure, they didn't seem to have grown at all in the course of a week; then they made a start, and I soon had to get longer sticks, as they had outgrown the first I made; and it quite delighted me to find what progress they were making while you and father were out at work. Many a time has dear mother said 'I led her the life of a dancing bear through worrying her so many times to get up and look to the fires when the weather was cold, lest the plants should get a check, and then go off.'"

"So you did," said mother, looking at her very lovingly; "and I am sure you saved his first lot of cuttings through it, for my poor head used to run wandering so from this thing to that, thinking what we could do for the best, that I often forgot all about keeping the fire up in the greenhouse, while George was working at the Reformatory gardens, so little did I think that keeping up the fire would be the making of us all."

"I remember well how merry we used to be over the spelling of some of the names father brought home with the cuttings he had got for me," I said; "and what hunting Jane had in our

old dictionaries to find the proper word for me to write on my labels, and how useful we found Lemprière. Daphne came to us spelt with a double 'eff,' and Amphitrite began with a large 'aitch,' that being the only sort of ham, I suppose, the grower ever heard of, and I have often been bothered since with the old heathen names they formerly gave to the flowers."

"They were not quite so simple and pretty as Golden Hair, or Mary Rose," said my sister, laughing.

"Don't be jealous, Jinny," I said. "I have got a Mrs. Edwards coming out next season, but you mustn't tell anybody, or they'll be nick-naming it the 'curate's wife.'"

She placed a bit of cheese crust on the nail of her thumb, and jerking it off by striking it against the under part of the adjoining finger, hit me fairly on the nose. It was one of her girlish tricks, when she was compelled to lie on her back, and many a time has she made both father and myself jump when we were hit unawares with a pea, which was her favourite shot; and though when a mere boy I had tried scores of times, I could never hit the mark like Jane. The Curate had been forced to beat a retreat out of reach of her sharp firing, so true was her aim, and though mother used to say, "Fie, fie, Jane," there was a laughing look about her eyes when she saw my father rubbing the end of his nose.

"It gladdens my heart to see you still as happy as you were when children," said my father, "and I do not think any parents had ever less to complain of than we have had; you were always dutiful and contented with the humblest fare, and I am sure never in my life did I spend a penny piece in waste or lay out a sixpence on myself, though I needed it, when mother wanted it for home. And now, sleeping or waking, we have two pounds a week coming in without either mother or me

doing a hand's turn of work, and all through you, my lad, turning florist; had it not been for that I should never have known that the garden was ours, and but for the railway company taking it, I should have gone on growing vegetables, and doing worse and worse every season, until at last I suppose the ground would have had no heart left in it, and produced next to nothing. Even now them lads, without either thy help or mine, are making ten times as much off the rood of ground a year since it was under glass as ever I made at the best of times off the whole acre, though it kept me awake many a night thinking what I could grow to make it bring in a pound or two a year more than it did. I put loads and loads of manure on it, though it was but money thrown away, for what I ever got extra never paid for the carting of it into the ground. I might almost as well have been useless all my life for what good I did, until you came and wakened me up, for with all my industry I was never able to raise more than enough to carry us barely over the winter—excellent manager as mother is—and many a time I was afraid I shouldn't be able to do that. Old heads are not always the best, George; that thou hast proved, my lad, by showing how much more there is in thy 'knowledge-box' than ever there was in mine."

"All praise is due to dear mother," I said; "it was in her knowledge-box, father, where the first thought of my growing flowers was found; she took it out, gave it me, and I only worked out the plan of the inventor. She but gave me the idea the night before we persuaded you to sell the bed of parsnips, long before they had done growing. It is mother that has made me what I am."

"Nay, George, you are giving me more praise than I

merit," replied my mother; "the extent of my foresight only reached to growing a few hardy plants under the old frames. I never dreamed of your covering the whole rood of ground with greenhouses, and producing such flowers as you have done. Yet it was through father you obtained so many choice cuttings; without those you would have done but poorly for the first year or so; and I think of the two I was more proud of the respect paid to your father by those who so freely supplied him with them than I was of your success, George. Those are the feelings of a wife, my son, and such I am sure Mary will entertain for you."

"I see I must speak up for myself, or nobody will for me," said Jane, with her merry laugh. "Do you know, very often while lying on my back preparing your cuttings, George, I for the hour together never once thought of what I was doing; it was so much pleasanter in the greenhouse to what it was in here, as I could see the face of heaven above me, and all the ever-changing forms of the clouds: and that I composed more of Cloudland while clipping at your cuttings under the glass than ever I could in-doors, when I got well enough to sit up with the pen in my hand; for while reclining there among the flowers, it seemed to compose itself, and I had only to take up the pencil and the little machine you contrived for me to write on as I lay down, and it was first a paragraph then a few cuttings: and so the double work went on pleasantly without my ever thinking of the tiny plants that were passing through my fingers, almost as quick as you could count them."

"I know I should never have produced half the plants I did without your help," I said; "and when you are made Mrs. Curate I shall present you with a nice little cheque-book, and

let you have a little account at my banker's all to yourself, not but that you may give a cheque to your husband now and then if you like, but it must be drawn by yourself. I have spoken to Mr. Edwards about it, telling him it was what had been long owing to you for working so hard at my cuttings; in short, the fruits of your own honest industry."

There was some little demur on my sister's part, in accepting so unexpected a present, but that I would not listen to, for I knew that a curacy which would only bring in some hundred and fifty pounds a year would afford her but little pin-money, and as Mr. Rose had already resigned to me the whole of his business, contracts and all, I felt certain that with care I should derive from it an annual income of at least a thousand pounds, to say nothing of the fortune he would give his daughter.

It was also Mary's wish that five hundred pounds should be banked for my sister Jane, for she was as generous as her father, and said, "it is not half so many hundreds as the thousands father handed over to me yesterday when he put a banking book into the pocket of my dress, and told me not to buy too many sugar-plums with the money."

This had nothing to do with his drawing account, as that I had the sole management of, but was money he had sold out of the funds, for the purpose of purchasing an extensive freehold, the sale of which never "came off," through a new railway company carrying their line across it.

There were some half score men at work in the roomy old house all the time Mr. Rose and his family were at Brighton, cleaning and polishing walnut wainscoting in the lower apartments, and painting and papering the upper ones, while what was to be "our" sitting-room had a bay window put in, which

would open on a new conservatory, that was to be filled with the choicest flowers. What all this cost I was never permitted to know, for when I asked Mr. Rose he smiled and said, "Nay, nay, George, I didn't put all my eggs into one basket, but kept a few to themselves, and when you can find out where they were hidden, then I'll tell you what these alterations cost, but not before. I thought I should like to see the old nest as tidy as it could be made, as my little bird wasn't going to fly away from it, but only going to bring home a mate to share it with her."

I knew he had a freehold out by Dulwich, which he let to an old friend, who only paid once a year, and this money he never banked; and these were the figurative eggs, I fancy, he brought out to pay for altering and beautifying "the old nest," as he called his house.

The committee of art was formed by my mother, sister, Mary, and Mrs. Rose, though I was occasionally consulted, yet never found it necessary to interfere with the instructions they had given to the various workmen.

It was a great compliment to pay me, and I fancied at first must have been rather expensive, though it turned out not to be so in the end; but Lily was determined that our sitting-room should have a new paper made from a pattern of her own designing, and very beautiful it was, for she had a genius for flower-drawing.

In her design she had blended the two geraniums I had named Gold Hair and Mary Rose, each showing alternately all the way up, and coloured as near to nature as was possible in paper-staining.

The pattern was so much admired, that numbers of our friends re-papered their rooms, and the paper-stainer had so

many orders, that he insisted on charging Lily no more than the usual price of the best paper; and he was so delighted with her design, that he had it registered.

A rustic cottage embowered in foliage.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I DO JUSTICE TO ALL, AND ATTAIN THE END AIMED AT.

So Lily was not one of Mary Rose's bridesmaids after all, but was also married on the same day and at the same church, Lorrimer taking his pretty bride to a rustic cottage embowered in foliage, after the social wedding breakfast which we all partook of in "the old nest," while I carried mine to Brighton, where they had been lodging, and where our respected land-

lady had made some little alterations to receive us. I had too many things to look after to spare time for a bridal holiday, so run up to town of a morning, and back again at night, just as I used to do before I was married.

At the suggestion of Mr. Rose, I let all my own greenhouses to Harry and Bill at a moderate rental, also making an agreement with them to supply me with so many bedding-plants every year, at a fixed price, until the contracts Mr. Rose had assigned to me had expired. Beyond this they were not bound down by me in any way, but free to find the best market they could for their flowers, and I had made them excellent florists.

They offered to take Nip into partnership, but he preferred "sticking to me and the young missus," as he called Mary. So we bought him another suit, and made him do double duty, and when he was not "tiger," he was "buttons," and waited at table. The only caution I found it necessary to give him was, "not to forget himself, and turn 'coach wheels' when he was bringing up dinner."

It was my dear mother's wish that our wedding-day should be celebrated by giving a dinner in the large greenhouse to the poor street-hawkers, who sold so many of our plants in those days when every shilling we took stood us in good service.

"They were very useful to us, George," she pleaded, "when we needed help, taking such plants as would not suit other customers, for, as they used to say to me, 'Missus, we can sell anything that will bear a flower,' and many a one that you had thrown away they have picked up and brought about, often bringing them back to show me what fine plants they were, and saying, 'It made my old woman at home quite

happy to water them, and watch them, and set them out in the sun.' And I used to think it gave pleasure to others besides, to those they sold them so cheap, for nothing pleased me more than to sell a potted plant to some poor person, for I used to think to myself, 'There's no knowing, perhaps they have seen better days, and lived in houses near which flowers grew, and that in the crowded courts and alleys they have been compelled to move into at last they may sit down and forget their troubles while looking at the plants they have bought, wandering away in their minds to the old homes of their childhood, where perhaps the flowers blowed and the birds sang in their father's garden, and they played about and gathered the bloom, and stood them in water on little tables, and mantelpieces, and window-sills; and while they sit stitching and thinking, and looking at the poor plant they have bought with the hard-earned penny, who can tell but what the dear old homes seem to rise up before them again somehow, which Jane could tell us all about in her pretty way, when she talks of imagination, and fancy, and memory, and such like things, which is nearly all Greek to a homely body like me, George.' But it was such thoughts as these that made me always so glad to serve the street-hawkers, and as such thoughts made me happy, I should like to make them happy by way of return, and give them all a good dinner, and plenty of it, and for Harry and Bill, and the two boys, and myself, to attend upon them; and if they bring their poor wives, and the children that are big enough to feed themselves, I don't see where the harm will be. It must be a cold dinner, excepting a few dishes of hot mashed potatoes, and a great plum-pudding boiled in the copper.—May I?"

Of course she might; and father ordered four great rounds

of beef, and two large Yorkshire hams, a barrel of porter and a cask of ale, and the lower tier was taken away in the greenhouse, so as to leave a clear space the whole width, and new planks and tressels hired, to form one large table, where fifty at least might be seated; and cooking was going on all day and night nearly, I believe, so that everything, and plenty of it, might be in readiness when the hungry guests arrived.

My father was at one end of the table, and my mother at the other, when she could find time to sit down; and though I was not present, I heard that all went on happily, and that some most original speeches were made by one or two of the costermongers.

One thing pleased me, it made my dear father and mother very happy to confer happiness on so many who rarely partook of what is (perhaps wrongfully) called "the enjoyments of life," which, after all, so far as only the animal portion of our existence is concerned, is health.

I know when I saw my old friend Mr. Rose with his gout, and his sherry and some dainty dish before him which he was unable to touch, that I used to look at him and think how much better he enjoyed life when, as he had told me (in his young years), he went out to work the long day through, living on his cold bacon, bread and cheese, and great bottle of beer, and neither thinking about nor wishing for better meat or drink.

I did what Mr. Rose had never done, and that was employing the very best of nurserymen and florists, at the highest salaries. If they had talent, I made price no object; the consequence was, that few carried off more prizes than I did at the horticultural exhibitions. Nor was this all; if some rare

flower had been grown by one of my gardeners, which he had watched and tended all hours almost, and that only his care and attention enabled me to carry off the prize, I gave him the reward he had so deservedly won, and that in his own name too, only allowing it to be stated that I was his employer.

Through doing such justice to my men, the very best of them came to me for employment, well knowing that if they merited it, their names would stand side by side by those of dukes and lords who were growers of rare flowers, that carried off valuable prizes, and this in time caused noblemen and gentlemen who were in want of clever gardeners to apply to me, and I was careful to recommend no one whom I could not thoroughly depend upon.

This again gave me great influence, causing gardeners of the highest abilities to seek employment under me, well knowing that, if deserving, their promotion was certain.

I took so many boys from the Reformatory, and placed them under my skilful gardeners, that at length the directors voted me a handsome service of plate, and gave me a splendid dinner, at which it was presented.

Through obtaining so many prizes, and one thing and another which caused my name to appear frequently in the daily and weekly journals, I was at last well known in the colonies, and written to to send out gardeners. I was also compelled to dabble a little in literature at times, confining myself to what I was most familiar with, which was the habits of birds and the beauty of flowers.

A hard worker all my life, nothing was a trouble; and as for a secretary, Mary, as I always called her, could get through *almost* any quantity of correspondence, and was

able any time to answer three letters while I was replying to one.

She and Lily were as great friends as myself and Lieutenant Lorrimer, and it made a pleasant change for the ladies visiting each other, and extending their acquaintance to such of their mutual friends as they alternately introduced.

As for my sister, she formed a clerical connection through her husband's friends, and soon found occupation enough in her district, and among the schools in connection with the church, for the publication of her "Cloudland" had been the means of introducing both herself and husband to the families of some rather high "Reverends."

I was also able to be of great service to the young bricklayer who rendered me so much assistance in building my first greenhouse, for I got him a situation under the skilful master Mr. Rose had recommended to me, and he so improved himself as to become as famous as a greenhouse builder as I was as a florist. We had many a little joke together about the brick-flue not drawing, when the only fault was in our letting the fire out, and relighting it with a large bundle of my neatly-written labels on which I had bestowed the labour of many hours.

I also found employment for several of my father's old friends, who like him had been unable to contend against the superior produce brought up by the railways and the increase of buildings with their smoke and impure air; for some of them I also obtained garden-ground of the railway company, far enough down the line for the air to be pure, and at a much less rent than they had been paying nearer London, nor did it cost them so much to bring up their vegetables by rail as it had done to cart them to market.

These little favours which I readily obtained were a great source of pleasure to my father, causing him to have a constant succession of visitors, who like himself loved to gossip about what they called "the good old times," and I took care that the dear old cottage was never without a good supply of ale and porter, and a rich ripe Cheshire cheese, with plenty of the best Virginia tobacco, so that they might enjoy themselves whenever they pleased to call, and not be sent away empty.

But what I think pleased my dear mother and father better than all was taking a garden at the first station down the line, well stocked with fruit-trees, and gooseberry and currant bushes. As it was only ten minutes' run by the train, and they had a free pass, it was quite a common practice for them in fine weather to go down of a morning and gather vegetables or what they wanted for dinner, while there were plenty of hands to do what little gardening was wanted; and as I took the ground on a good long lease, I run them up a neat summer-house, put in a stove, and furnished it, supplying everything required to prepare a comfortable meal.

Many a pleasant tea-party did we muster at times, when the fruit was ripe, Lily and Lorrimer, myself and Mary, Jane and the Curate, and other friends; for the place I had built was quite large enough to accommodate a dozen people without crowding. I also laid in a little wine, and a stock of cigars, for I could well afford it, and took down the Captain and a few of my brother officers, for by this time I had been made lieutenant, and my friend Lorrimer bore the rank of captain.

I do not think we ever once overstepped the boundary of sobriety, though we did once nearly verge upon it; and that was all owing to Mr. Rose and Lily's father, who, when I won the silver tankard at a rifle-match, would have an extra bottle or

two of claret emptied into it, to celebrate the victory; and while I was properly punished by a severe head-ache on the following morning, my jolly old father-in-law had a sharp attack of the gout.

Out of the young men employed by me in different places, I had selected a dozen of the smartest and entered them into the rifles, for Lorrimer and I often talked over the defenceless state of our coast, and were quite convinced that our thousands of riflemen were a much better protection than if every mile of it had been covered with fortifications, at a cost of millions, as in a few hours a hundred thousand brave fellows could be gathered at one point, while no nation could raise shipping enough to bring over half that number of invaders, if ever the attempt was made.

"It is something to be proud of," said Captain Lorrimer, "to belong to a country that can muster an army of nearly a quarter of a million of men, well used to handle arms, and costing government next to nothing, for with engines that can carry a train fifty miles an hour, steamers that can run sixteen knots in the same time, and guns that carry a shot four miles, and plenty of them all, old England is in a better state of defence than if her long miles of coast were walled with iron."

I was glad to find that one so experienced as my friend felt certain of our security, come what might, for I had now a great stake in the country, which I did my part towards defending.

When I look back and consider the humble position I occupied when a boy, and think that but for the encouragement my dear mother gave me—and the path she directed me into, and which I followed obediently—I might have all my life remained a poor hard-working market-gardener;—when I think of this I

rebel against the rule which advises us to rest satisfied with the lowliest estate we may be placed in, for I will not believe that it was ever intended that one endowed with human intelligence was predestined to remain stationary.

There are and ever will be, I suppose, "hewers of wood and drawers of water," and I pity those who remain contented with such servile occupations. Those who exclaim against ambition raise a cry against all progress, for it is that which causes a spirited lad to strive to excel both in the playground and in the school, and though on the latter point I speak not from experience, as my education was of the very humblest, yet I have known many who won the honour of captaincy in our schools that went out and distinguished themselves in the world as they were sure to do.

Had I been kept down and remained only a common market-gardener, I should have striven hard as I grew older to have carried off a prize at some exhibition of vegetables, for the finest cabbage or lettuce, if I could have grown nothing better; for I believe that in the humblest calling we may for a time follow, any one with a right ambition will reach the top of it.

I was once introduced to a halfpenny barber, who could lather and shave a man clean in little more than a minute, and his shop was crowded with customers. That little barber was not without ambition, and I have no doubt had as fine a set of razors as ever were used.

I knew a sweep, whose ambition never soared higher than a chimney-top, but he went about his business in a natty little cart, and drove a fast-trotting pony, and no one swept so many chimneys every morning as he did, for he would be at the door to the moment; no one had ever to wait for him, as he booked

his engagements. Had I never known Mr. Rose, nor had a friend, saving such as I made through the way I conducted my business, I should still have carried my head high among florists, and saved money by growing flowers on the rood of ground that was left out of My Father's Garden.

THE END.

BRADBURY, EVANS, AND CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

A CATALOGUE

OF

ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

SUITABLE FOR

School Prizes or Christmas Presents.

ILLUSTRATED GIFT-BOOKS.

SUITABLE FOR DRAWING-ROOM PRESENTS.

These Gift-Books are beautifully printed in 4to, on the finest paper, and bound in cloth, with gilt edges.

DALZIEL'S FINE-ART GIFT-BOOK FOR 1867.

Wayside Posies: Original Poems of the Country Life. Edited by ROBERT BUCHANAN, with Original Illustrations by PINWELL, F. WALKER, and J. W. NORTH. Engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. Price 21*s.*; in elegant or antique morocco, 35*s.*

The Life of Watson, the Sculptor. By DR. LONSDALE; with Photographs. 4to, cloth, 21*s.*

A Round of Days; containing 40 Original Poems, by WILLIAM ALLINGHAM, AMELIA B. EDWARDS, J. INGELOW, the HON. MRS. NORTON, TOM TAYLOR, and others. Illustrated by DALZIEL, A. B. HOUGHTON, F. WALKER, J. D. WATSON. 21*s.*; antique or elegant morocco, 35*s.*

Tennyson's Poems; illustrated by CRESWICK, MACLISE, MULREADY, MILLAIS, C. STANFIELD, and others. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

Home Thoughts and Home Scenes: Poems by JEAN INGELOW, the HON. MRS. NORTON, and others. Illustrated with large Pictures by A. B. HOUGHTON. 21*s.*; morocco, 35*s.*

Wordsworth's Poems; with Plates by BIRKET FOSTER, JOHN GILBERT, and WOLF. 21*s.*; morocco 31*s.* 6*d.*

Longfellow's Poems; complete edition, with 170 Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

Robinson Crusoe. By DANIEL DE FOE. With Portrait, and 100 Illustrations by J. D. WATSON. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

The Parables of Our Lord; with large Pictures by J. E. MILLAIS. 21*s.*; morocco, 35*s.*

Birket Foster's Pictures of English Landscape; containing 30 beautiful Pictures of Country Life, with Descriptions by TOM TAYLOR. 21*s.*; morocco, 35*s.*

The Book of British Ballads. Edited by S. C. HALL. Every page richly embellished with very fine Wood Engravings after Designs by CRESWICK, GILBERT, FRANKLIN, CORBOULD, and others. Imperial 8vo, 21*s.*

The Poems of Oliver Goldsmith. Edited by the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT, with Illustrations by BIRKET FOSTER, printed in Colours. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

English Sacred Poetry of the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries. Edited by the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT, M.A., with Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT, HOLMAN HUNT, J. D. WATSON, and others. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

The Princess. By ALFRED TENNYSON. Illustrated by MACLISE, with a Portrait of the Author. Medium 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*; morocco, 16*s.*

Keats' Poetical Works. Edited by Lord HOUGHTON, with Illustrations by GEORGE SCHARF. Demy 8vo, 10*s.* 6*d.*

The Poetical Works of Eliza Cook; with Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT, J. D. WATSON, HARRISON WEIR, and WOLF. 21*s.*; morocco, 31*s.* 6*d.*

Landscape Painting in Water-Colours. By GEORGE BARNARD. Illustrated by 26 Drawings and Diagrams in Colours. Royal 8vo, 21*s.*

Thomas Campbell's Poetical Works; with beautiful Illustrations from Turner's celebrated Designs. Demy 8vo, 16*s.*

Common Wayside Flowers: a Book of the Country, by THOMAS MILLER. With 24 Illustrations by BIRKET FOSTER. Printed in Colours. 15*s.*

Home Affections pourtrayed by the Poets. Edited by DR. MACKAY, with Illustrations by MILLAIS, JOHN GILBERT, and others. 12*s.* 6*d.*; morocco, 16*s.*

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Edited by GEORGE OFFOR, with 100 Illustrations by J. D. WATSON. 12*s.* 6*d.*; morocco, 16*s.*

Odes and Sonnets; illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER, and printed in Tints. Small 4to, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Summer-Time in the Country. By the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT, with Plates by BIRKET FOSTER, HARRISON WEIR, and others. Small 4to, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Milton's L'Allegro and Il Penseroso; with Steel Plates by BIRKET FOSTER. Imperial 8vo, *7s. 6d.*

Griset's Grotesques: Jokes drawn on Wood, with Rhymes by TOM HOOD; containing 100 quaint Designs by ERNEST GRISET, engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. 4to, *7s. 6d.*

Little Lays for Little Folk; selected by J. G. WATTS, with Illustrations by the best Artists, engraved by J. D. COOPER. 4to, cloth, gilt edges, *7s. 6d.*

Leaves from a Christmas Bough; with coloured Illustrations. 4to, cloth, *7s. 6d.*

Homes and Haunts of the British Poets. By WILLIAM HOWITT. Profusely Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, *7s. 6d.*

English Country Life. By THOMAS MILLER. With 300 Illustrations. Beautifully bound, crown 8vo, cloth gilt, *7s. 6d.*

Extraordinary Men and Women, their Childhood and Early Life. By WILLIAM RUSSELL. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, *5s.*

What Men have said about Women: a Collection of Choice Thoughts, compiled and arranged by HENRY SOUTHGATE, with Illustrations by J. D. WATSON. Crown 8vo, cloth, *5s.*

In small 4to, cloth, gilt edges, price *5s.* each, with Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT, BIRKET FOSTER, HARRISON WEIR, CORBOULD, and others.

Longfellow's The Courtship of Miles Standish.

Wordsworth's Deserted Cottage.

Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming.

Milton's Comus. *Beattie's Minstrel.*

Longfellow's Voices of the Night, Ballads, and other Poems.

The Golden Harp; or, Hymns, Rhymes, and Songs for the Young. Printed on toned paper, with 52 Illustrations by J. D. WATSON, DALZIEL, WOLF, and others. Square 12mo, cloth gilt, *3s. 6d.*

Picture Fables. By OTTO SPECKLER. With Rhymes by HEY. With 100 Illustrations by the Brothers DALZIEL. Crown 8vo, cloth, gilt edges, *3s. 6d.*

Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare; with coloured Illustrations. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, *3s. 6d.*

STANDARD BOOKS,

SUITABLE FOR PRESENTS.

ROUTLEDGE'S STANDARD LIBRARY.

In post 8vo, toned paper, green cloth, price 3*s.* 6*d.* each; bevelled boards, gilt edges, 5*s.*; half calf, 6*s.* 6*d.*; full calf or morocco, 9*s.*; tree calf, gilt edges, 10*s.* 6*d.*

1. *The Arabian Nights.*
2. *The Adventures of Don Quixote.*
3. *The Adventures of Gil Blas.*
4. *D'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature.*
5. *A Thousand and One Gems of British Poetry.* Edited by Dr. MACKAY.
6. *The Blackfriars Shakspere.* Edited by CHARLES KNIGHT.

The Pleasures, Objects, and Advantages of Literature. By the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT. A new Edition, fcp. 8vo, cloth, 2*s.*

Motley's Rise of the Dutch Republic. Post 8vo, cloth, gilt edges, 6*s.*

Spectator (The). By ADDISON, STEELE, and others. Revised Edition, finely printed, 4 vols. crown 8vo, cloth, 14*s.*; or the 4 vols. bound in 2, cloth, 12*s.*

Boswell's Life of Johnson. The 4 vols. in 2, cloth gilt, with numerous Illustrations, 10*s.*

Hogg (Jabez) on the Microscope. New revised Edition, with 400 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth, 6*s.*

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Edited, with Life, by Archdeacon ALLEN, and Designs by J. D. WATSON. Post 8vo, new type, elegantly printed, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Roby's Traditions of Lancashire. 2 vols. 8vo, cloth, 24*s.*

Æsop's Fables. Edited by the Rev. G. F. TOWNSEND, with 112 Plates by HARRISON WEIR. Post 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

Half-Hours with the best Letter-Writers and Autobiographers. Edited by CHARLES KNIGHT. Crown 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Northcote's Fables; with 274 Woodcuts by the Author. Post 8vo, cloth gilt, 2*s.* 6*d.*

London: How the Great City Grew. By G. R. EMERSON. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Geological Gossip on the Earth and Ocean. By Professor ANSTED. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

The Language of Flowers. By Mrs. BURKE. With numerous Engravings, and a coloured Frontispiece. Royal 16mo, gilt edges, 1*s.*

The Book of Humour, Wit, and Wisdom; selected from the best Authors. Post 8vo, cloth gilt, 3*s.* 6*d.*

The Book of Familiar Quotations: a new and revised Edition. Post 8vo, cloth gilt, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Froissart's Chronicles of England, France, and Spain; with 120 Illustrations. 2 vols. super royal 8vo, cloth, 25*s.*

Monstrelet's Chronicles: a new and cheaper Edition. 2 vols. super royal 8vo, cloth, 24*s.*

The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall. 6 vols. fcp. 8vo, cloth, 30*s.*

Heads of the People. By DOUGLAS JERROLD, THACKERAY, and others. With 108 Plates by KENNY MEADOWS. 2 vols. 8vo, cloth, 2*l.* 2*s.*

The Horse in the Stable and in the Field. By STONEHENGE. With 160 Illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth, 12*s.*

Once upon a Time. By CHARLES KNIGHT. A new and enlarged Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Last Words of Eminent Persons. Edited by JOSEPH KAINES. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

Men I have Known. By WILLIAM JERDAN. Post 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

The Journal of a London Playgoer. By Professer MORLEY. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

VARIOUS EDITIONS.

The Pictorial Shakspere. Edited by CHARLES KNIGHT. A new Edition, thoroughly revised by the Editor. 8 vols. super royal 8vo, cloth, 4*l.* 4*s.*

Routledge's Illustrated Shakespeare. Edited by HOWARD STAUNTON. With 1,200 Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT, and a Steel Portrait. 3 vols. super royal, cloth, 2*l.* 16*s.*

This book is also kept in a variety of calf and morocco bindings.

Shakespeare's Works. Edited by HOWARD STAUNTON. With copious Notes, Glossary, and Life. 4 vols. demy 8vo, cloth, *2l. 2s.*
The Famous Shakespeare of 1623.

Shakespeare's Works: (a reprint of the 1623 folio). Large paper, 4to edition, cloth *2l. 12s. 6d.*

The Shakespeare Gallery; with 95 Photographs of Scenes from the Plays. Small 4to, cloth, gilt edges, *2l. 2s.*

Shakespeare's Works: (a reprint of the 1623 folio). Fcp. 4to, cloth, *31s. 6d.*

Shakespeare's Works. Edited by W. HAZLITT. 5 vols. fcp. 8vo, *15s. 6d.*; or with gilt edges, *18s.*

Shakespeare's Works. Edited by THOMAS CAMPBELL. With Life, Portrait, and Vignette, and 16 page Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT. Bound in cloth, bevelled boards, *12s.*

The Blackfriars Shakspere. Edited by CHARLES KNIGHT. Post 8vo, cloth, *3s. 6d.*

Choice Thoughts from Shakespeare: a Collection of Extracts from his Works. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, *3s. 6d.*

Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare; with Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT. Printed in Colours, fcp. 8vo, cloth gilt, *3s. 6d.*

Quotations from Shakespeare; selected by EDMUND ROUTLEDGE. With an Index. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, gilt edges, *2s. 6d.*

POETRY AND THE DRAMA.

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS, NOTES, ETC.

Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar; with Biographical and Critical Notices by LEIGH HUNT, and Portrait and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, *16s.*

Massinger and Ford; with an Introduction by HARTLEY COLERIDGE, and Portrait and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, *16s.*

Ben Jonson; with a Memoir by WILLIAM GIFFORD, and Portrait and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, *16s.*

Beaumont and Fletcher; with Introduction by GEORGE DARLEY, and Portraits and Vignettes. 2 vols. royal 8vo, cloth, *32s.*

John Webster; with Life and Notes by the Rev. ALEXANDER DYCE. Royal 8vo, cloth, *12s.*

Marlowe; with a Memoir and Notes by the Rev. ALEXANDER DYCE. Royal 8vo, cloth, 16*s.*

Greene and Peele's Dramatic Works. Edited by the Rev. ALEXANDER DYCE. Royal 8vo, cloth, 16*s.*

Spenser; with selected Notes, Life by the Rev. H. J. TODD, M.A., Portrait, Vignette, and Glossarial Index. Royal 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Chaucer; with Notes and Glossary by TYRWHITT, and Portrait and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Dryden; with Notes by the Revs. JOSEPH and JOHN WARTON, and Portrait and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

Pope; including the Translations: with Notes, Life by the Rev. H. F. CARY, A.M., and Vignette. Royal 8vo, cloth, 10*s.* 6*d.*

The Dramatic Works of Sheridan Knowles; with Portrait. Post 8vo, cloth, 7*s.* 6*d.*

The Dramatic Works of Lord Lytton; with Frontispiece and Vignette. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, 6*s.*

The Poetical Works of Lord Lytton; with Frontispiece and Vignette. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, 7*s.* 6*d.*

Routledge's British Poets. Best Edition. Edited by the Rev. R. A. WILLMOTT, Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER, GILBERT, CORBOULD, FRANKLIN, and HARVEY. Elegantly printed on good paper. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, bevelled boards, gilt, and gilt edges. Price 5*s.* each; or, morocco elegant or antique, gilt edges, 10*s.* (except where specified).

SPENSER'S FAERIE QUEEN. Morocco. 11*s.*
CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES.
KIRKE WHITE.
SOUTHEY'S JOAN OF ARC, AND MINOR POEMS. Morocco, 11*s.*
DRYDEN'S POETICAL WORKS.
POPE'S POETICAL WORKS. Edited by CARY. Morocco, 11*s.*
MILTON'S POETICAL WORKS. Morocco, 11*s.*
THOMSON, BEATTIE, AND WEST.
GOLDSMITH, JOHNSON, SHENSTONE, AND SMOLLETT.
HERBERT, WITH LIFE AND NOTES. Edited by WILLMOTT.
GRAY, PARNELL, COLLINS, GREEN, AND WARTON.
COWPER. Edited by WILLMOTT.
AKENSIDE AND DYER. } Edited by WILLMOTT.
BURNS' POETICAL WORKS. }
FAIRFAX'S TASSO'S JERUSALEM DELIVERED.
PERCY'S RELIQUES OF ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY.

Routledge's British Poets (*continued*)—

SCOTT'S POETICAL WORKS. Morocco, 11*s.*
MACKAY'S BALLADS AND LYRICS.
WORDSWORTH. Morocco, 11*s.* CRABBE.
MACKAY'S SONGS. Complete Edition.
ELIZA COOK'S POEMS. Morocco, 11*s.*
MOORE'S POEMS. BYRON'S POEMS. Morocco, 11*s.* each.
LEIGH HUNT'S POETICAL WORKS.
CAMPBELL'S (THOMAS) POETICAL WORKS.
BENNETT'S (W. C.) POETICAL WORKS.

Also uniform,

LONGFELLOW'S COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS, including "Tales of a Wayside Inn." Morocco, 11*s.*

LONGFELLOW'S PROSE WORKS.

Routledge's British Poets. Cheap Edition. With Illustrations by BIRKET FOSTER, GILBERT, CORBOULD, WOLF, HARRISON WEIR, and others. Fcp. 8vo, cloth, gilt edges, 3*s.* 6*d.* each; or Morocco, elegant or antique, 7*s.*

COWPER'S POETICAL WORKS.
MILTON'S POETICAL WORKS.
WORDSWORTH'S POETICAL WORKS,
CRABBE'S POEMS.
SOUTHEY'S JOAN OF ARC, AND MINOR POEMS.
GOLDSMITH, JOHNSON, SHENSTONE, AND SMOLLETT.
KIRKE WHITE. By SOUTHEY.
BURNS'S POETICAL WORKS.
MOORE'S POEMS. BYRON'S POEMS.
THOMSON, BEATTIE, &c.
POPE'S POETICAL WORKS.
GERALD MASSEY'S POEMS.
JAMES MONTGOMERY'S POEMS.
SCOTT'S POETICAL WORKS.
HERBERT'S WORKS. Edited by WILLMOTT.
CAMPBELL'S (THOMAS) POETICAL WORKS.
BLOOMFIELD'S POEMS AND REMAINS.

Also, uniform with Routledge's British Poets. Cheap Edition.

LONGFELLOW'S COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS, including "Tales of a Wayside Inn."

Bradbury, Evans, & Co., Printers, Whitefriars.